NEW SERIAL BY GEORGE MANVILLE FENN JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 398. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 15TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

1896 PROCLAMATION.

GRAND PIONEER REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son the well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds, **will take effect on sight** of this advertisement. **Super-eminent.**—The **Queen's Royal Household Prudential, Eclipse, and Alarm Carpets and Hearthrugs,** to (Reg.). **Amazingly** interesting, instructive, and detailed **Grand Reduction** Catalogue post free, if, when writing, you mention this paper.

REMARKS.—A lady customer writes complaining that we send out too large a Carpet for the money. Be it so or not, we send out no Carpet measuring less than 6ft. by 9ft.—even for 2s. 11d. **TEST THEM. THEY WILL SURPRISE YOU.**

OUR NEW VENTURE! Yes, Two Different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! (Copyright). This is a wonderful step in economy.

PRODIGIOUS SALE OF THE

"PRUDENTIAL" Reversible CARPETS

(Registered.)

Reversible, with a different pattern on both sides, woven throughout with handsome border to correspond; richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. Made in 10 sizes only. These carpets are the production of much care, labour, and forethought, and are made in handsome and elaborate patterns (which are protected by registration). They combine on one side the rich blended colours of the Turkish and Persian with on the reverse the elegant designs of the Wilton. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

	Each.		Each.
6ft. by 9ft., Reduced Sale Price	4/9	9ft. by 15ft., Reduced Sale Price	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	5/11	12ft. by 12ft. " " "	12/9
9ft. by 9ft. " " "	7/6	12ft. by 13½ft. " " "	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft. " " "	8/6	12ft. by 15ft. " " "	15/9
9ft. by 12ft. " " "	9/6	12ft. by 18ft. " " "	19 6
10½ft. by 12ft. " " "	11/6	15ft. by 21ft. " " "	22/6

When ordering please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

"Naval Lodge, Upper Norwood, S.E., January 18th., 1896.

"The Dowr. Lady Abercromby is pleased with the 'Prudential' Carpets ordered."

Blairquhan, Maybole, N.B., August 3rd.

Lady Hunter Blair writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson & Son send her another 'Prudential' Carpet, same as before, crimson and gold, dimensions, 9ft. by 10½ft. Cheque inclosed."

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg)., to match above Carpets, sent for 1s. 6d. extra, size 2 yards long, and 1 yard wide.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Hearthrugs for 4s. 3d.; or 6 for 8s.; or 12 for 15s. 6d.

EXTRAORDINARY REDUCTIONS.

100,000 "ALARM" CARPETS

(Registered). **GUARANTEED GENUINE BARGAINS.**

Sale Price 2/11 EACH.

This Gigantic Offer is a Special Contract, made with readers of *Short Stories* only. We will forward direct from the looms to any address on receipt of amount, A GENUINE WOVEN, SEAMLESS, REVERSIBLE CARPET, the largest ever sold at the Price.

Suitable for Sitting-room or Bedroom, Bordered and Woven in Art Colours, large enough to cover any ordinary-sized room, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any Middle Profits. Remember these are Woven, not printed, and are made of a material almost equal to Wool. Thousands of these Carpets and Rugs have already been sold at almost double above prices. A Rug sent with Carpet, 10d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER. 2 Carpets and 2 Rugs ... ... 7s. 3d.

Value unequalled in the Annals of Advertising. As a favour, kindly Examine and Compare these Carpets.

"SHORT STORIES" CARPET COUPON, 15/8/96.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

All orders dispatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. Cheques and P.O.'s payable to

F. HODGSON AND SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants,

WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.

Telegraphic Address—"Eclipse, Leeds." Telephone No. 948.

MASON'S

EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

HYSON GREEN WORKS,

Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(REALLY GENUINE.)

In Patent Air-tight Tins, ½lb., **1s. 4d.**; 1lb., **2s. 4d.**; 2lb., **4s. 4d.**, including Tin and Postage.

MRS. CONYERS, KILKHAMPTON, STRATTON, N. DEVON

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FOR SUMMER HOLIDAY WEAR
OR FOR
ANY WEAR ANYWHERE.

THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

READY-MADE OR TO MEASURE.

Are an extraordinary revelation of low-priced excellence in an age where nothing ordinary will suffice.

MODEL 469.

Model 469, as illustrated, is a new Coat and Skirt Costume. Latest Shape. Open Coat, square corners, neat revers. Full wide Skirt. Only **10/6.** Carriage 9d. extra.

MODEL 458 is a charming Mode, consisting of very smart Bodice, prettily trimmed fine Military braid, Fancy Buttons Full Wide Skirt. Price **10/6** only. Carriage paid 9d. extra.

COLOURS.—All Costumes can be supplied in either **Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Electric Blue, Ruby, Petunia, Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.**

Sizes in Stock fit figures 34, 36, or 38 in. round bust under arms; Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front. Larger or Special sizes made to measure for 1/6 extra.

"NEW DRESSES FOR EVERYBODY."

JOHN NOBLE'S Latest Volume of Fashions sent Post Free to all readers of *SHORT STORIES.*

SEE THIS LITTLE LASSIE? Well, she may **RUN, ROMP, or RAMBLE** on the sands, in the fields, or in the playground, and yet never look untidy, because she is wearing one of those ideal children's garments,

1/6 The JOHN NOBLE KNOCKABOUT FROCKS 1/6

Made in The John Noble Cheviot Serge, with long full sleeves, saddle top, and pocket.

Sizes	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45 in.
Prices	1/6	2/-	2/6	3/-	3/6	4/-	4/6	5/-	5/6

Sent Carriage Paid 4½d. extra.

Cheques, Postal Orders, etc., should be crossed "London and Midland Bank," and made payable to

JOHN NOBLE LTD., Brook St. Mills, MANCHESTER.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

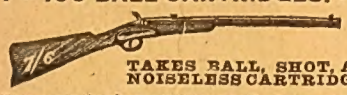
In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

7/6 SALOON GUN WITH 100 BALL CARTRIDGES. 7/6



TAKES BALL, SHOT, AND NOISELESS CARTRIDGES.

This gun is the cheapest in the world. It is not a toy, but a practical well-made **Saloon Gun,** 37½in. long, weight about 4½lb. **100 Birds or Rabbits** can be killed with it at cost of **1/6** only with shot cartridges, or **6/-** per 500. Will penetrate a deal board 1in. at 50 yards. Can also be used in the house as a **Target Rifle,** with NOISELESS Cartridges at **1/-** per 100, or **5/-** per 1,000. This gun is fitted with a beautifully finished stock, nickel-plated fittings, etc., etc. **Price 7/6 with 100 Ball Cartridges.** Each gun is tested, regulated, and proved before sent to customer. **The "Union Jack" Pistol** (Registered), with 100 Ball Cartridges, price **4/6,** or pair for **8/-. Block Action Saloon or Garden Guns** (very superior manufacture) with 100 ball cartridges. No. 1 Bore, **12/6;** No. 2 Bore, **13/6;** No. 3 Bore, **15/6.** No. 3 Bore at 15/6 will kill a bird on the wing at 35 to 45 yards. Send for Price Lists of Air Guns, Saloon Guns, sporting novelties and ammunition. If you cannot send to-day, cut this advertisement out, and write some other time. ADDRESS—**W. R. JACKSON,** Wholesale Arms and Ammunition Dealer, **Tottenham, MIDDLESEX.**

(*Mention this Paper.*)

TOO THIN IN THE BUST.

Ladies desiring any improvement in this direction should send me stamp for free particulars of a simple, inexpensive harmless self-treatment, whereby a *full natural bust* can be obtained. Address, in confidence, Mrs. B. K NORRIS, 7, Addington Crescent. York Road, London, S E.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 33

Aug. 15, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, DUKE STREET, VILLIERS STREET, LONDON, W.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. HOLT. Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

ONE BOX
OF
Dr. Mackenzie's Improved
Harmless Arsenic Complexion Wafers

will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire; clear, fresh, free from blotch, blemish, coarseness, redness, freckles, or pimples. Post free for 4/6.—**S. HARVEY,** 5, Denman St., London Bridge, S.E. Half boxes 2/6. Use **Dr. MACKENZIE'S ARSENICAL TOILET SOAP.** 1s. per Tablet; No. 2 unscented, 6d. per Tablet. **Made from Purest Ingredients and Absolutely Harmless.**

Beware of the many imitations.
HAVE DR MACKENZIE'S OR NONE.

GLOSS JUST LIKE CHINA.

Every man likes his shirt, collar, and cuffs to look exactly like china. It is very easy, too, to get the effect. You have only to rub some of Redford's China Gloss on the linen before ironing, not mix it with the starch, and then you have a beautiful polished surface. A shilling box, containing enough to last for a month or two, sent free by post on receipt of thirteenpence by Redford & Son, G. Dept., 30, Oxford Street, Liverpool.

NEW HARRISON

Swift Gold Medal
KNITTER.

KNITS Stockings ribbed or plain, Gloves and Clothing in Wool, Silk, or Cotton. Instructions Free. Lists free per post. 25 Triumphant Awards, including 7 Gold Medals, for the "Harrison" and "Sun" Machines.

Harrison Knitting Machine Co., Ltd. Works: 48, Upper Brook St., Manchester.

HIGH-CLASS TAILORING

Every Garment cut to measure.
DIRECT from the Manufacturer, Saving all Middle Profits.

LADIES' TAILOR-MADE COSTUMES

In all the present Shades, From **10/6** to **70/-.** Value Unequalled. Fit Guaranteed.

MEN'S SUITS 18/6

Better Qualities, 22/6, 25/6, 31/6, 37/6, 45/-, 52/6, 63/-.

Cycling Suits from 12/6.

BOYS' SUITS.

Pieces for mending sent with all Suits.

See our New Patterns before ordering. *It will pay you to do so.*

Hundreds to choose from. Fashion plates and measure forms free on application. All Goods Carriage Paid.

Factory Clothing Co.
Manufacturing and Ladies' Tailors.
117K, ALBION ST., LEEDS.

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EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY

SHORT STORIES

No. 398.] For the Week ending August 15th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

AN INTERMINABLE FIVE MINUTES.

IT was agreed amongst us that to become famous it was necessary to get oneself prominently before the public.

"An occasional interview with the presiding magistrate of a metropolitan police court, for instance," remarked Charlie Dempster.

His remark was treated with the silent contempt it deserved.

"It seems to me," quietly said young Owen, a medical student of frivolous proclivities, "it is only fellows who do something outrageous that really become well known to the great B.P. What lasting fame or distinction is to be derived from having one's portrait exhibited at the Academy, for instance. A few thousand people go there, it is true, but it is only to a very small section of them that one's individuality appeals. Now what I should like," he went on in a meditative tone of voice, "would be to have my exact face and figure, my *alter ego*, in fact, exhibited at Madame Tussaud's; there one does get a chance of being really known."

"You are quite right, my boy," put in an elder man of our little group, Major Ryder; "there is nothing like wax, so long as it doesn't melt, to stamp one's identity on the public mind. Were any of you fellows ever in Russia, I wonder?"

We one and all admitted we had not been so far, whereupon the speaker continued:

"Well, I was once, a good many years ago now, and what is more my identity, or at any rate a remarkably good likeness of me in wax, still remains there for all I know."

"How on earth did it come about, old man?"

"Well, it's a curious story, and I have never told it before, but it can't do any harm repeating it now; but mind you, I shall not mention time, place, or proper names."

"Let X be an unknown quantity, and as A is to B, so is C+D to E," was the laughing rejoinder, "by all means preserve the lady's *incognito*—I suppose there was a lady in it? or were you a political suspect, or something worse?"

"No it wasn't quite so bad as that; nothing more than a little harmless flirtation, on my honour, but she was a very charming woman, I admit, and the worst of it was she was married, and to a wretch who did not properly appreciate her. Posssibly that was what made me pity her so. Without making a boast of it, I may mention that she was a lady of rank, and her husband, who also owned a title, was fabulously rich and unreasonably jealous of her—absolutely, I assure you, without a shadow of an excuse so far as I was concerned—was in a position to employ a small army of detectives to keep a watch on her movements: not that I should have minded these, but there was one who was far more difficult to contend with—the lady's aunt, a duenna of the severest description, whose astuteness was almost incomprehensible.

"You can easily imagine therefore that under these circumstances, although my intentions to the lady were strictly honourable, and our friendship purely platonic, it was not by any means an easy matter for me to see much of her and do my best to make her life a little pleasanter than it otherwise would have been.

"In a country like Russia, where the liberty of the subject, even although he be an Englishman, is lightly regarded by persons in high authority, it can be easily understood that I ran no small risk of passing the remainder of my existence immured in a foreign fortress. Such things have happened before now, as you are all doubtless aware, but I was ever noted for my gallantry to the fair sex, and for the sake of her I braved the risk.

"I would wish you to understand, please, that our intimacy was not entirely clandestine. At regular periods I was wont to call at the lady's house in an orthodox way, and on these occasions the manner in which the female dragon used to glare at me is a thing I shall never forget. Our conversation at such times

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used to be of the most ordinary kind, not a word being said at which the most jealous of husbands could possibly take exception; but need I say it, there were other occasions on which we managed to meet. The lady was a great admirer of art, and I, too, was not adverse to spending an hour or two occasionally in one or other of the big picture galleries in the town, and by a strange concidence our tastes were so much in common that we often found ourselves in the same place. Ah, the bliss of those stolen interviews! The memory of them will never forsake me.

"Perhaps, however, the place of all others where we felt ourselves to be more than ordinarily safe from observation or interruption, was a certain waxwork exhibition, almost as important in its way as the world renowned establishment in Baker Street. At the picture galleries there was always the danger of meeting someone moving in the same high social circle as my companion, but at the waxworks no such danger existed, it not being considered the fashion to go there. Not that it was absolutely without a drawback inasmuch as it was the favourite resort of the upper class of servants, and as my companion moved in the very highest society in the town, and visited a great deal, her face was everywhere more or less well known. Still there was a means of getting out of the difficulty, and we were not long in discovering it. One part of the exhibition was set apart for *fac-simile* representations of notabilities, individuals who had never done anything notorious, and were consequently not likely to attract the ordinary class of visitors to whom the local chamber of horrors presented a far greater attraction; and this particular part of the building we often had entirely to ourselves.

"One day we were sitting there in one of the comfortable nooks thoughtfully provided by the management, and I was narrating one of my many experiences with a view to enlivening my companion, who seemed to be unusually *distraite*, when suddenly, and just as I was at a most exciting part of the story, she gave a startled little cry of affright.

"'What is it, dearest?'

"For answer she convulsively clutched my arm and uttered the one word, 'look,' which I did, and saw to my dismay the She Dragon approaching us from the other end of the room. She wore glasses, being near-sighted, and I felt instinctively she would to a certainty recognise us. And then what was to become of her!

"I confess I felt a cold shiver go down my back; not, mind you, that I had done anything to be ashamed of, but in Russia you know things are different to what they are in England, and the vista of incarceration for an undefined period loomed uncomfortably before me. Worse than all I had not the slighest idea of what to do to get out of the very awkward predicament I found myself in. It was only my companion's quick wit that saved me, I may say us.

"'Quick,' she whispered, 'step up on that platform and stand sideways by the side of that old man. There is just room. Fold your arms; look fierce; that's right; and above all don't move. Didn't you tell me once you belonged to some learned society—F.R.—— What was it?'

"'F.R.G.S.,' I hastily replied.

"'Yes, yes; and what is G.S.?'

"'Fellow of the Royal Geological Society.'

"'Of course, how stupid of me, and that accounts for your wonderful hairbreadth escapes, of course,' with a smile. 'Now don't move or we are ruined,' and with a last look to make sure her instructions were understood, she attentively regarded one of the figures close by, and then suddenly catching sight of that terrible female—her aunt—she advanced to meet her.

"'So you have come to see it, too, then? My child, what are you doing here? Are you by yourself?'

"'Quite, Aunt. I came came out of curiosity to see the model. Hadn't you heard about it?'

"'Heard what?'

"'Why, about our friend, Mr. Ryder!'

"'And what of him, pray?'

"'Why, he is a most noted *savant*, a member of the—what is it now?' making a pretence of looking for the usual label attached to each of the figures. 'How stupid of them; they haven't given him his title. Oh, I know the Royal Geological Society.' And then, going on without giving the old lady time to answer, she continued, looking at me critically: 'I don't call it a very good likeness, do you know? He looks so severe, not at all like what he really is, is it now?'

"The old lady's answer was a contemptuous 'humph! Well I declare,' at the same moment advancing her parasol as if to prod me.

"Quick as thought my Guardian Angel divined her intention, and in an awed tone said:

"'You mustn't touch the figures. Look at the notice.'

"The parasol remained poised midway, and I breathed again—at least, I tried to—inwardly hoping that in so doing I had not what you would say given myself away, but just at that moment an individual in a grey uniform, one of the police officers employed to keep order in the building, effectually arrested the further progress of the upraised parasol by pushing it gently downwards, at the same time saying deferentially but decisively: 'Visitors are on no account to touch the figures, Madame.'

"I could have hugged him on the spot.

"The old lady said never a word, but if a look could have melted a wax figure, I should assuredly have been dissolved instanter. Turning angrily away she strode off, the attendant following in her wake and after him my deliverer.

"I remained immovable, anticipating that she would shortly return, which she did, and clapping her hands with delight, said: 'Capital! You could not have done it better—but—' pursing up her lips, 'we are not by any means out of the wood yet. I got rid of her, but she suspects, I know she does, and the only thing to be done is there must be a *real* model of you here by the time this place opens to-morrow morning.'

"'But——' I expostulated.

"'It must, and it shall. See here,' opening her purse—a well filled one—'money will do anything in this country, take it, and do as I bid you.'

"I demurred, as who would not? but she was accustomed to have her own way, and after a time I consented to do as I was told. Having escorted her to a cab I lost no time in making my way to the proprietor, or rather proprietress, of the exhibition, and made known my desire to have a portrait model of my humble self prepared that very evening, and, what was more, promised that if it were placed in position by the side of the learned Professor, whose name I mentioned, before the hour of opening on the following morning, I was prepared to pay down a certain sum, the amount of which made the good lady open her eyes in amazement.

"'But, monsieur was unknown,' she urged.

"Then in my grandest manner I gave her to understand that if for personal and private reasons of my own it had been my desire up to the present to remain *incog*, she

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would speedily find that once my model occupied a position in her exhibition my name was a household word in learned circles all over the world.

"This seemed to impress her and, added to the influence of the promised payment which I was I stated prepared to make even before the operator commenced to make the necessary cast of my features, any scruples she might have had were effectually dispelled.

"Later on found me seated in an armchair in the modelling room, my face covered with plaster of Paris, in which the necessary holes had been left for sight and breathing. Presently I saw to my consternation the police officer enter the room who had been the means of saving me from detection but a few hours previously.

"In his hand he held an official looking document, and he delivered himself as follows: 'An order has been issued by the municipal authorities that all exhibitions are to remain closed to-morrow, the day having been set apart for special intercession for the safety of the Tsar.'

"Here was an unexpected respite.

"'Who have you got in the chair—a new subject, I suppose?'

"'Yes, perhaps you noticed a new model in the professor division to-day?—well, that was Mr. Ryder, the noted geologist, who has been in this town for months, and his identity only becoame discovered yesterday, when, naturally anxious to be first in the field, I waited on him and obtained permission to take a cast.'

"'That's the one the old lady wanted to prod,' and he laughed as he remembered it.

"I felt inclined to do the same, but I realised that to do so would ruin the reproduction of my features which was fast approaching completion.

"'But if you took one cast, what on earth do you want with another?' he asked suspiciously.

"'Well, you see the Professor wasn't altogether satisfied with himself; it is wonderful how particular some of 'em are, even when they have nothing much to be proud of in the way of looks.'

"'Well, this new Professor, as you call him, wasn't what you might call handsome, and he had a scowl on him enough to terrify any ordinary being—by-the-bye, have you got him in the catalogue?'

"'No. You see it was only exhibited yesterday for the first time.'

"'Ah, quite so. Well, don't forget; no opening to-morrow,' and, with a stare at me, and a good-night to the operator, he was gone.

"At last the horrible ordeal of being plastered up, like the luckless individuals one reads of, who were entombed in walls, and left to die a lingering death, was over, and I was once more free of speech and sight.

"My first question was: 'When will this model be ready?'

"'By to-morrow night,' was the reply.

"'Now about your catalogue of the exhibits, how often do you publish one?'

"'Once a year as a rule.'

"'But if you have any additions in the meanwhile?'

"'Oh, I just insert a leaflet.'

"'When is your next catalogue due?' I asked, ignoring his last remark.

"'As a matter of fact it is in the printer's hands now, and was to be delivered to-day!'

"'Good! Now can you guarantee that by to-morrow night—I am prepared to pay handsomely for my whim,' I remarked; 'my name, with the number of the exhibit and a short sketch of my career, can appear in the new catalogue and that copies will be in the exhibition on the opening morning, the day after to-morrow.'

"'It might be done, but the expense would be enormous.'

"'Never mind the expense,' I replied loftily, 'let it be done, that's all; and now I will hasten home, remove these clothes, and let you have them again in less than an hour.'

"For the first time since my adventure I felt somewhat at ease. The clothes, the appearance of my name in the new catalogue, would together form a chain of evidence it would be impossible to disbelieve. My next move was to get a notice inserted in one or two of the leading daily papers announcing my identity, and that the celebrated Professor Ryder, F.R.G.S., and the humble individual who had hitherto been content to pose as plain Mr. Ryder were one and the same.

"Further than this I determined to put a bold front on the matter. I paid a formal call the next day at my divinity's house, made myself as agreeable as possible to her brute of a husband, and the She Dragon accepted the congratulations of the former, and effectually parried the searching remarks of the latter, finally winding up by laughingly remarking that it would be a good joke to go and see myself the next day.

"The proposition was at once cordially agreed to by Dr. Hunt, and I fancied I could detect a malicious gleam in her eyes.

"We went; and, needless to say, made direct for the group of learned men. Myself amongst others.

* * * * *

"Shortly afterwards, the setting out of an important expedition, bent on geographical research, afforded a reasonable excuse for my sudden return to England; and I felt that it was wise to avail myself of it. But you see it is quite possible to get oneself exhibited in a public place without committing any great atrocity."

"Yes, and by indulging in a very pleasant occupation, too."

"Gentlemen, I give you my word of honour, our friendship was purely platonic, and the Major sighed heavily as he thought of the days that had been."

S. J. F. NEWBERY.

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.

No. 4.

WE regret to announce that the result of this compe- must take the form of that published last week. Eight hundred odd competitors entered for this competition, and three hundred and eighty of them succeeded in putting the story together absolutely correctly, and were the prizes divided among them each would receive about sixpence. Instead, however, of forwarding this amount, we are sending to each winner a penknife.

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 5.

THE London guinea goes this week to Mr. W. Nicholson, 29, Kingsgate Street, High Holborn, W.C.; and the provincial guinea to Mr. J. C. Parsons, 22, Devon Street, Glasgow.

The longest word in which the same letter occurred only once was *considerably*, page 160, col. 1, line 21.

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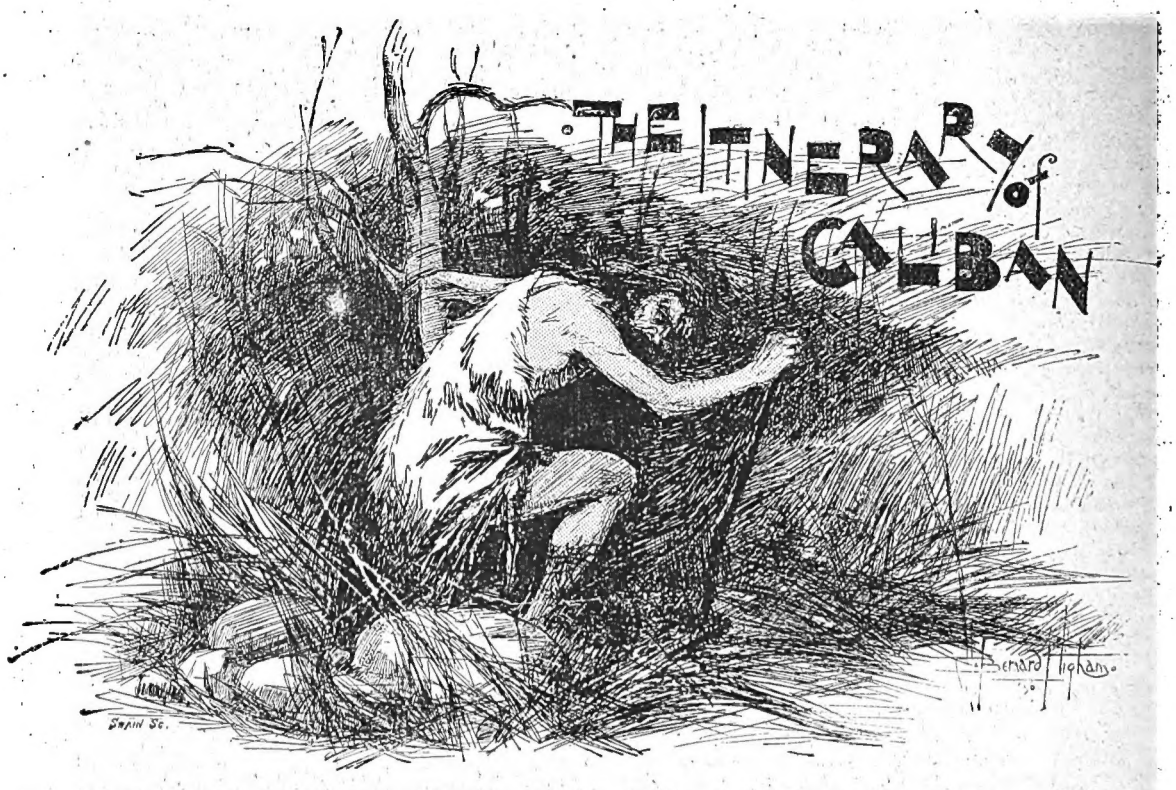

I COMPLAINED one afternoon to Doctor Marcy, who besides being my physician was also my very intimate friend, that I found twelve hours of daylight, during which I was not allowed, owing to the condition of my eyes, to read or write, longer than the same number of weeks of the congenially occupied.

"Sweet are the uses of industry," I said; "heretofore, I have been wont to give myself credit for the labours I have accomplished. Now that I am compelled to pass my time in idleness, suddenly am I made aware of the fact that I have been all along merely following a natural human instinct of avoiding *ennui*."

"Providence," said the Doctor, "wisely supplies us with an abundance of playthings that we may not keep asking, like children at the *matinée*, 'when is it going to begin,' as well as various other questions the answers whereof are not easily found."

"But my toys have all been taken away," I remarked, "and I can find nothing to do except to keep asking myself these very questions of which you speak."

"You should get new toys," answered my friend, stroking his beard; "go out and study nature."

"In a city park with custom-made flower-beds and a lake run in a mould?"

"I intend that you shall go out into the country as soon as I have finished with this treatment. In the meantime you can interest yourself a little more in human nature. Mingle with the crowd whenever you can and study its characteristics."

"*Odi profanum vulgus!*" I exclaimed, and I rose from my chair and walked to the window. I looked out through the dusky goggles, which the Doctor compelled me to wear, across the yard into the street and to the city beyond. All the world seemed to be in a miserable limbo of twilight.

"You grow peevish," said my friend presently; "you must make occupation for yourself of some kind, else I shall be called on ere long to minister to a mind diseased. If you are forbidden great things, then do the best you can with trivial. Become an apostle of the commonplace. For mental employment, recite the poetry you learnt when you were young; for diversion, play games with the children; if you want conversation, go and get your hair cut; if there is need of exercise, take a long walk."

I laughed, but did not turn away from the window or make any reply.

The Doctor continued: "A long stroll, say two hours or more, ought to form a part of each day's programme. Don't wander about aimlessly, but visit some particular place, or walk by some established rule. It is not a bad plan to imagine yourself a shadow-detective and follow up different pedestrians. You might, perhaps, get a more varied route by pursuing some stray dog."

"These be rare pastimes," said I.

"Then there is a penny walk," my friend began to say.

"A penny walk?" I exclaimed.

"Yes; that is a perfectly simple device to produce an exciting variety in a stroll. Stockton describes it in one of his stories. You stand at a corner and flip a penny; if it comes heads, go to the right; tails, to the left. When you come to the next corner, repeat the process."

"It has the advantage of being a very economical form of amusement," I remarked.

"Precisely. If you prefer it in a more extravagant form you might flip a sovereign."

"Apropos of stray dogs, which you mentioned a moment ago," said I, still at the window, "here is one coming up the path in your front garden."

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The Doctor approached the window and looked out. The dog, which was a big, shaggy Russian terrier had stopped with his forefeet on the bottom step, and was looking eagerly up at the window. When he saw Marcy, he ran up the steps and stood in front of the door, wagging his blunt tail vigorously.

"Hallo," said the Doctor; "it is you, is it? Want to come in? There is a mystery of some kind about that dog," he continued to me, as he stepped out into the entry to open the door, "which I should like to have you explain, if you can. Come in, Towser, or whatever your name may be."

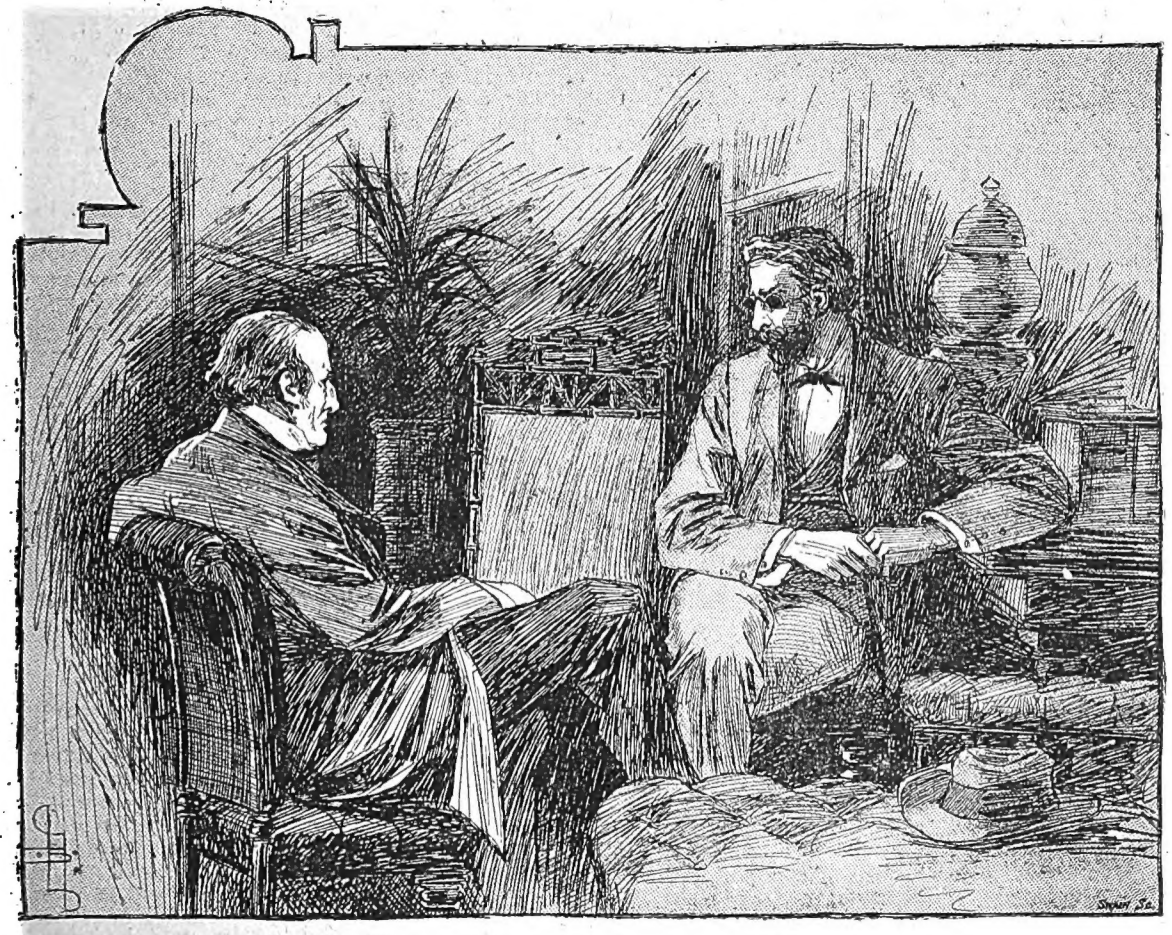
The moment the door opened the dog bolted through the hall into the consultation room, where we had been sitting. There he stood still for a few seconds in the attitude of a setter, head erect, ears pricked, legs spread apart, with the right forefoot raised in the air. With one quick glance he took in the entire room, letting his eyes rest for a moment on me. Then crouching down upon the floor, he put his head between his paws and lay perfectly quiet.

"He always goes through that same performance," said the Doctor; "half-a-dozen times I have found him at the door, waiting to be admitted. As soon as it is opened, he rushes into the room, and lies down in the position he has now. Presently he will ask to be let out."

"Belong to some neighbour?" I asked, taking off my coloured glasses that I might get a better look at this mysterious animal. He was exceptionally large for a terrier, but his alert, saucy physiognomy showed that he was of pure breed. His hair was of a wolfish grey and as curly as moss. It had the effect of making his whole figure, including the stubby neck and the snort, thick legs looked gnarled and tough.

"He is not a beauty by any means," said I; "but I think he would be a good dog to bet on."

"That is a comprehensive way of putting it," said the Doctor; "his appearance suggests, to my mind, infinite faithfulness; and I conceive that his presence here illustrates it. Some time ago—about six months, I should think—this dog's master came here to consult me as to how long he could hope to live. He was a man of only about thirty-five years of age, but he was an absolute wreck. At the first glance, I saw that he had been through the white heat of dissipation, and without much soliciting on my part, he told me something of his story. I remember the dog lay there exactly as he is lying now, and he kept his eyes fixed on his master. In an unconcerned way, very much as though he were speaking of some third person, the man explained how he had been killing himself by degrees with whisky, absinthe, opium, and cocaine. He did not thing that he



Here the Doctor's eyes brightened.

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could last much longer, and would like to know what my professional verdict would be on that point. I studied his eyes while he talked, and made up my mind that he was on the verge of madness. It was useless to try to do anything for him, unless he should himself make a powerful effort towards reform, and I started to tell him so; but he interrupted me. 'I am not going to ask you about remedies,' said he; 'what I desire to know is how much longer am I likely to live.' I did not discuss the matter further, but proceeded at once to a searching examination, with some very interesting results."

Here the Doctor's eyes brightened, and he began to describe, in technical language slightly modified for my understanding, the demoralised condition of heart and lungs revealed by the stethoscope. There was, it appeared, an astonishing disarrangement of every function of the body, betokening a climax of dissolution not far removed.

The Doctor presently emerged from the professional mist in which he had enveloped himself and continued the story. "When he pushed the question again of how long he might expect to live, I assured him that, if he made no change in his present habits, a horrible death of some kind was only a few months away. Some of the symptoms he described were those of approaching deliria. My advice to him was that he apply without delay for admission to the House for Inebriates, and I offered to give him a letter to the examining physician. He had cross-examined me narrowly with regard to the diagnosis, but as soon as I began to suggest a course of action for him to follow, he made a gesture of impatience and rose from his chair. He asked my fee, and when I told him the amount, he paid it into my hand. Then he took up his hat and, thanking me in a stern, almost savage fashion, went towards the door. The dog followed at his heels; but as the pair crossed the threshold, the animal turned and gave me such an intensely human look of sorrowful appeal that I give you my word, Firmin, it has haunted me ever since."

"He probably understood in a vague way," I remarked, "that something was wrong with his master."

"About a week later," said the Doctor, "the dog returned alone, and I admitted him. He acted just as he does now. I brought him food and drink, but he would not accept either. Since then he has called a great many times, and whenever he is let into this room he always goes through with this same performance."

The dog now rose to his feet, and, after again looking all about the room, started towards the door. I took up my hat and stick, and followed him.

"And you never saw the master again?" I inquired.

"No, nor heard of him."

I opened the front door, and the dog ran out into the street. He seemed to understand that I was planning to accompany him, for he stopped on the pavement and looked back at me, while I explained to the Doctor that I was about to carry out his suggestion and follow a stray dog. He assured me that I had selected a good subject—one which was decidedly out of the commonplace.

"Now, see here, my friend," I said to the dog, as soon as I caught up with him, "you seem a very intelligent fellow, and I believe you will understand most of what I say. I am going to follow you, do you see? I shall go wherever you go. Now don't run along too fast, for I cannot keep up. Slowly, slowly, understand!"

The terrier wagged his short tail vigorously, and started off at a moderate trot a few feet in advance of me. Every now and again he stopped and looked back to see if I were still following him. There was an air of sturdy earnestness about all his actions which reminded me of a child made prematurely old by care and responsibility.

"Evidently," said I, to my guide, "you have led your master, as you are now leading me, perhaps when the night was dark and stormy, and he was very drunk. If he fell in the gutter, I suppose you shook his arm until you woke him up. When the police took him in charge, you went in search of bail among his dissolute friends, if he had any."

We emerged from the quiet, respectable street in which my friend resided into a main thoroughfare of the city. Presently the dog dodged into a doorway, and stood looking expectantly at me when I came up. In the window, at one side, was a large display of bottles artistically arranged. The doors were hung with light curtains, impenetrable to the vision. Above there was painted, in large gilt letters, "Harry and Jack."

"So this is one of the places," said I to the dog; "and you are waiting for me to go in and follow the example of your former master." I pushed open the door, and my companion ran in. A large man, with a florid countenance and expansive shirt front, was vigorously polishing the counter of the bar with a towel. The other proprietor sat in an armchair at the opposite side of the room, reading a newspaper and smoking.

"Hey, Jack," the latter called out, as soon as we entered; "here is that fellow's dog again."

"Give him some meat, poor devil," said "Jack." Then he stopped his work of polishing and asked me what I would have.

I explained that I was merely looking for a friend, and then said: "That is a bright-looking dog. Is he yours?"

"No, he isn't," said the mixer of drinks, resting his elbows on the bar; "he used to belong to a fellow that came here to get a drink, now and then. Don't know where he has gone to."

"What was his name?"

"Well, those who were with him generally called him Tom, but I never heard no other name. Used to get full pretty often. Never seemed to know when he had had enough. When a man gets to drinking like that——"

Here a customer entered and called for whisky, checking the barman's incipient temperance homily. "Harry," in the meantime, had come forward, his hand full of small pieces of cold meat, which he tossed to the dog. They were caught in the air and eagerly devoured.

"Here, Ban!" he said as he threw him a piece.

"Is his name Ban?" I asked.

"That is what they used to call him," answered "Harry," looking up at me; "mighty intelligent dog, he is, too. He would take his master home when he was too far gone. Now he comes here sometimes to get something to eat, and, you bet, I always give it to him. Don't I, Ban?"

The dog, with his mouth full of meat, wagged his short tail enthusiastically. Then we went out into the street again and threaded our way through the crowd for a few squares. Whenever we passed a drinking place, my guide would slacken his pace a little and look about; but as I showed no disposition to enter, he would hurry along. Presently we turned into a quiet street leading off the main thoroughfare, and I began to talk out loud to my companion.

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"So your name is Ban, is it?" said I; "it is an odd title. Are you so ugly that Tom, whoever he may be, regarded you as a sort of a Japanese curio?"

I repeated the name several times, and as I did so, the words of a catch in *The Tempest* suddenly occurred to me, and I spoke them aloud:

"No more dams I'll make for fish;
Nor fetch in firing
At requiring;
Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish,
'Ban, 'Ban, Ca—Caliban
Has a new master—get a new man."

When I came to the name Caliban, I spoke it with special emphasis. The effect upon the dog, who stood attentively listening, was quite unexpected. With a sudden yelp he sprang up in the air towards my face, and ran round me, leaping and barking. Then he seemed to regain control of himself and to remember, for he came and crouched down at my feet, whining softly.

"Caliban, Caliban," I repeated, and each time I spoke the name the dog whined again and crouched closer to my feet. "That is evidently what Tom called you when you were alone together, and I am, perhaps, the first to have uttered that name since your master disappeared. Now that we are thoroughly introduced, you will trust me, won't you?" Caliban wagged his tail affirmatively. "Very well, then, you may lead on."

I motioned with my stick and Caliban bounded along in front, turning back every few yards to make sure that I had not disappeared. A short distance down the street, I marked the imposing façade of the building from which the *Great Daily* was issued. Caliban made directly towards it, passing the business offices and entering at a side doorway which led to the editorial rooms. As we ascended the stairs, I said to myself that I had probably discovered the means whereby the dog's master had been wont to earn a living.

Caliban brought me through the outer offices, which at this time in the day, were unoccupied, to the desk of the assistant-editor, a gentleman with whom I was very well acquainted.

"How did you happen to get possession of that dog, Firmin?" he asked, looking up from his work.

I answered that I had followed the animal up the stairs, and then inquired as to who was his owner.

"I do not think he has any owner," replied the assistant-editor; "I believe he's a genuine 'vagrom' animal, and I marvel that some pound-keeping Dogberry does not order that he be 'comprehended.'"

"He must some time have had a master," I suggested.

"He used to follow in the rather irregular wake of a man by the name of Gower—Tom Gower, if I remember rightly. You never knew him, did you?" I shook my head. "He did specials for a while, and occasionally I gave him a chance in the editoral columns. Good writer, but villainously dissipated; unreliable on that account."

"Where is he now?" I asked.

"I have no idea; indeed, I wish I knew, for I could give him plenty of work just at present, and the poor fellow always looked as though he needed it. I imagine that he must be dead or have left the city, otherwise the dog would not be wandering about in this fashion."

Caliban had, by this time, begun to show signs of impatience, and, after I had answered some inquiries from the assistant-editor about the condition of my eyes, we took our departure. I felt that I was now in possession of a much clearer idea as to the personality of the man in whose footsteps I was following. A sense of fraternity with him had sprung up with the knowledge that he had earned his living by my own craft. A dissipated and reckless Bohemian, with no friend in the world save this ugly-looking dog—a character well worth running down and investigating. For this there could be no better guide than the very one which I had happened upon by chance.

Started off at a trot a few feet in advance of me.

"After all, Caliban," I said, to my companion, "it is quite as well that you cannot talk. As we progressed in this itinerary, you would have explained everything, and not allowed me the flattering unction of drawing a successful inference. Long before this I should have been bored with your well-meaning chatter, and the career of Tom Gower would have been bereft of all possible interest for me. Hereafter, whenever I want a guide, I shall try to secure one that has no power of speech."

Caliban was trotting along a few paces in front of

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me, and I noticed in his carriage a jaunty swagger which had not appeared before. Every now and again he would look back at me and then execute a caper and bark.

"Aha!" said I, "we have been to the office and we have money in our pocket. Now we are going to spend it. Is that the idea, Caliban?" Every time that I spoke the dog's full name he started and turned round, evidently mindful of his lost master.

We turned several corners, and were presently in a locality with which I was not very familiar. Caliban, on the contrary, seemed perfectly at home. The streets were narrow and very dirty; they swarmed with people instead of vehicles. Here and there they shaded off into alleys, which were so like the streets that they could not be distinguished from them. Everything looked dingy and spattered. The sun, which had elsewhere shone almost offensively bright, seemed to be radiating through a haze. I slipped off the dark glasses which I had been wearing and called to my guide not to run so far in advance. At the word, he stopped in front of a small chemist's and looked inquiringly at me. I nodded my head, and he walked over to the doorway.

He looked first at me.

It was a shabby, disreputable-looking place, several steps below the level of the pavement. When I pushed open the door, a bell, which was hung over it, jangled fiercely, and a hoarse voice from behind a partition at the end of the room, cried: "Be out in a minute!" I stared around at the fly-speckled "Patent medicine" advertisements and the long rows of bottles on the dusty, paintless shelves, and said to Caliban: "What do we want here?"

This inquiry was repeated a moment later by an individual with a pale face and red eyes, who came forward behind the counter. He looked first at me and then at the dog. I fancied that I noticed in his eye, as he caught sight of Caliban, a flash of uneasiness.

"Has Mr. Gower been here recently?" I asked, in a bland tone.

"I don't know anybody by that name," answered the apothecary, glancing again at my companion.

"But you will recognise his dog, I think," said I.

"The man you mean has not been in here for six months or longer. The dog comes sometimes."

"He told me once," said I, mendaciously, "that this was the place where he used to get his opium and cocaine."

The man folded his arms and stared coldly at me.

"And so," I added, "I thought you might possibly know something about him."

The apothecary turned and began to move back towards the roost from which I had disturbed him. "I know nothing whatever about the man," said he; "he often tried to buy opium of me, but I let him have only a small amount at a time."

"Caliban," said I, when we were again out on the pavement, "our friend within is a liar, is he not?" It was quite evident, from the anxiety the dog had displayed to get out of the shop, that his opinion of the pale-faced man was as unfavourable as my own, although perhaps based on a different process of reasoning.

Farther on, the street widened somewhat, and the houses appeared to make some effort to assume the virtue of respectability, even though they had it not. I began to meet well-dressed men here and there, and an occasional cab rattled over the stony road.

We went too fast and made too many turnings for me to retain any knowledge of the streets through which we passed. I was presently conscious that we were again back in the disreputable portion of the town. It was still too early for the night workers to swarm out, but the evening twilight gave to the houses a sinister appearance, like that on the faces of ruffians who sleep. At intervals, Caliban would stop before some villainous-looking grog-shop and wait until I came up.

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"See here, Caliban, now why do we go up this alley? It is a ghostly place for either men or dogs—especially just now when there is only enough light to see our way, and not enough to make these very harmless objects around us—boxes, barrels, and cans—show for what they are. Am I to climb over that pile of timber and into this low, dirty-looking shed? Do you want to get me arrested for a maurauding vagrant? Now, what are you searching for? There is nothing on that pile of dirty straw. Heavens! Do people live in such quarters as these? There are lights through the cracks in the partition. Hark! A woman's voice!"

"Somebody is movin' in the next room, Jim!"

"It's that dog. I'll get in there and stick a knife through his pelt, some time. Comes here every night since that feller crawled in there that time and——"

"Yes, yes; the police took him away. Don't talk about it. It scares me now to remember how horrible his face looked."

"Hold on, Caliban! Wait till I ask—you will go, eh? And the police took him away, did they? Then the next thing is the station."

But the next place was not the station. It was a small stone building over whose arched doorway appeared the words "City Hospital." It stood in a small side-street, abutting a number of large buildings which fronted upon the main street. A burly policeman was pacing up and down the pavement outside. He touched his hat to me as I came up, and I recognised him as an old member of the force.

"Good-evening to you, Mr. Firmin. How does it happen that you have my dog with you?"

"Your dog? Why do you call him yours?"

The man stopped to pat Caliban, who was rubbing against his legs. "Because," said he, "he comes every night just about this time to see me. He makes up to me, like he is doing now, until he is sure I am good-natured, then he runs up to the door and begs to be let into the hospital."

"Why does he do that?"

"I think, sir," replied the man in a half-whisper, evidently fearful lest the dog should overhear what he said, "he is looking for his master. I'll show you. When I open the door, see, he runs along the hall to that room there. Well, *that's* where we put his master when we got him to the hospital. He had shot himself in the head over near Riley's Alley. The dog followed into the room, and beating wouldn't get him out. So they let him stay. There is no one in the room now. He just goes in and looks about a little and then comes out—just like he has done now."

"What was the man's name; did you find out?" I asked as Caliban returned to us.

"He had a note in his hand addressed to the person who should find him. He said that his name was Edward Thompson, and that he had come from some town up North. He said he was a civil engineer, but could not get any work, so he was going to shoot himself. I read the note myself, so I remembered it. 'I have no friends,' that is what it said in ending."

"And what finally became of him?" I asked; but just as I spoke, I caught a glimpse of Caliban disappearing round the corner. I could not wait for the answer to my question without losing my guide, and I hastily broke away, almost upon a run. I called to the dog, but he refused to look round. He was not going very fast, and I succeeded in overtaking him as he turned into the main road, which ran parallel to the street upon which the hospital was situated.

"Now then, my friend Caliban, surely we have not much further to go. It grows late, the streets are deserted, and the sunlight, under which we started upon this little journey, has given way to the blackest of night. Here you stop in front of this magnificent pile of stone and marble, and look up at its classic columns. Do you want me to push open this iron gate? Very well, now you are in the yard, where do you propose to go? To the back of the building, through this narrow passage, where the echo of my heels upon the stone pavement sounds like the rattle of bones? And now you crouch in front of that window, which opens into the basement below. There appears to be some kind of a shoot down which boxes are slid. I will tell you what it is, Caliban, I can see through the dusty pane. What! The dissecting-room of a medical college! And now I know, by this long, sad howl, that your itinerary is ended."

CHARLES DWIGHT WILLARD.

POST-CARD COMPETITION.

No. 7.

THERE is a discrepancy somewhere in this number between the text and one of the illustrations. A guinea is offered to the first person living within a hundred miles of London who points this out, and another guinea is offered to the first person living beyond this distance. *Post-cards only, please.* Other forms of communication disqualified.

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THE BOOK OF ALISTAIR KENNEDY.

It was on a Sunday evening early last winter that I saw the book of Alistair Kennedy. Months before, in talking of the work and ambitions common to us, he had mentioned that he had grown bold and was writing at length. Then, and several times since, I had asked him to tell me more than the mere fact, to describe his motive and characters; but always he had laughingly refused. Friendship was constant in everything save in the affairs of authorship; he could only say that he had found a vein of life as yet unworked by the novelist. When the book was finished I should see it and praise; until then my curiosity must be unsatisfied.

A day or two before the evening he had written to me that his work was done, and that the book would be brought out at Christmas. The publishers had returned the manuscript with some suggested alterations, and if I liked I might see it before it finally left him. My answer to the letter was a visit to his rooms on the evening, and of this visit and of what followed I write. As faithfully as I can I will tell the incidents of the two or three hours from the time Kennedy replied to my congratulations.

"Yes," he said, "Brown and Bowyer have accepted it, and expect a big sale. I don't think the book is badly done; but then I am prejudiced. You shall judge for yourself. Here it is; do you read, and I will smoke and watch if you approve. But of course you will approve."

I took the bundle he passed across the table, and turned over the typewritten sheets, and learnt what was his book. The unworked vein of life was the Salvation Army. On a grey background of barrack-room and shelter he had shown grey pictures of men and women. With the circumstance that gives air of truth he had told the loves and hates of captain and lieutenant, bandsman and tambourinist. It was an unkind book; blame was sounded often and clearly, praise seldom and in falsetto of cynicism; the writing was the writing of a scoffer. Unfair though the book was, it was cleverly made, and would find a public willing to buy. Chapter after chapter I quickly read; all were written with skill, and all had a certain power. The book would have the success that was hoped for; but it was bad, bad as it was clever. At the end of a bitter impeachment entitled 'Blood Royal,' I tired of the reading; pushing back my chair I looked to Kennedy in remonstrance.

"Well," he said, "what do you think of it? Will it go?"

"The book is not good," I said. "It is very easy to abuse people and parties of people, to bring forward the bad and hold back the good. It is——"

"That is not what I mean," he interrupted, "Is the book well written? Will it sell?"

"Yes," I said, "the writing has strength, and will be read. But the whole thing is unfair. I cannot understand how you, Kennedy, an emotional man, could have written it. Where is the morality?"

"If the book takes," he said, somewhat angrily, "I shall be content. The morality is clear to me. You think I am showing up the Army; well perhaps I am and perhaps I am right to do so. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever been to a Salvationist meeting, or slept in a shelter, or talked to a soldier?"

"No," I said, "but——"

"You confess," he interrupted, "you know nothing of the people or their methods, and yet say I am unfair. Why, my dear fellow, I have lived the life for months, and have written from facts; it is you who are unfair. But it is not too late to begin to study. I am not quite satisfied with the colouring of the third, the conversion chapter, and should like to watch another meeting. There is a hall but a few yards away, and presently we will go to it. You shall listen to the bandsmen as with music they charm the world; you shall see the sisters as with flourish of tambourines they charm the bandsmen. You will come?"

"You talk as you write, Kennedy," I said. "Yes, I will come. When do we start?"

"Now," he said, gathering together the typewritten sheets, "I will put these away—no, I will bring them with me; you may want to refer to them—and we will go. The show begins at seven, and we will lose as little as possible."

His anger had gone at the thought of guiding me to the life he had found, and he laughed as he gave me my hat and led the way to the street. Arm in arm we walked to the corner, and across to the low-roofed building which was the hall.

"It is late and we have commenced; but I think there is standing room. Come in; God bless you," said the soldier at the entrance; as we passed in to the meeting.

"Yes, the seats are all taken; we will wait here," said Kennedy, placing his book on the floor; and near the beginning of the middle aisle we stood and looked about the room.

Across the far end was raised a platform, on one side of which sat men who played on this and that instrument, and were the band, and on the other women who shook tambourines, and sang in high shrill voices, and were now the followers, and now the leaders of the men. Below the platform, and with face sometimes towards and sometimes away from it, stood the captain, waving rude time with the hymn book in his hand. Between the captain and our place of watching were three or four hundred people who sang, or tapped feet on the floor, or were silent as was their mood. Around platform, captain and people, were thin wooden walls, with a hundred decorations of texts and mottoes, and advertisements of Army merchandise and Army meetings.

Verse after verse of the hymn was sung, and again and again there followed the refrain. The faces of the brothers grew hot and flushed, and the bodies of the sisters rocked to and fro with the emotion and the exercise; yet still the praise was loud, and still the gas flames flickered in its wind. The captain raised his hand for quiet; and the noise of the playing and

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singing became less, and then was gone. In strong heart phrase he prayed, and in loud accompaniment the soldierscried "Glory," and "Hallelujah;" with his eyes Kennedy smiled at the boy and girl lovers who sat in the corner near to us, whispering to each other; in study of facts I listened and saw. The prayer came to an end, and there was a hurry of "Amens" and then a silence. Once more the captain spoke; turning to the platform and back to the people below, he asked whether any soul was moved to tell its tale. To the invitation a bandsman answered, and leant from his place and spoke of the misery that was his when, as a sinner, he walked with the world, and of the joy he now had in singing and praying with those above the world. "Glory! Glory! Praise the Lord!" said the people; and again there was a silence.

"Brothers and sisters," said the captain, "as some of you know we have a visitor to-night. Lieutenant Gray has come from Edinburgh to speak to us, and has much to say. May the Lord bless her words. Will you stand here, Lieutenant, please and be among us?"

"Willingly," said a girl in the front row of the platform, as she took his hand and stepped to his side. "Willingly, Captain. I wish to speak so that you may all hear, and like well to be among you. Truly I have much to say: and may the Lord indeed bless the words."

"The Lieutenant is pretty," whispered Kennedy as, raising her bonnet and throwing back her head, she began the address. "She is very pretty. I wonder we did not notice her before. What do you think of her?"

For a time I gazed down the aisle to the girl and listened to her words. She was more than pretty; she was beautiful. The black oval bonnet was setting for a finely formed face, made bright by earnest eyes looking from the shadow of dark waving hair; the rudely cut serge gown could not triumph over the grace of the slender figure, but fell closely and was servant to it; the hands that moved to and fro in gesture and persuasion were small and very white. Like an ideal of gentle puritanism she stood and spoke; and her voice was sweet to hear, and her words were clear and forceful.

"She is indeed good to see," I answered Kennedy. "I, too, wonder why we did not notice her before. There is nothing like her in your book. Is she an exception?"

He made no reply; and I saw that her words had moved him to interest, and that he was smiling, and leaning forward. The thought came to me that he was studying his third chapter, and added to my dislike of all that he had written.

The minutes passed, and her speaking grew very eloquent. The people ceased their "Glories" and hearkened in silence. The smile left the face of Kennedy and his breathing became more quick and his eyes more earnest. Though less moved than some, I felt upon my cheek the flush of excitement.

Still she spoke on, and her words were fast and high as of one who wrestled with souls unto prevailing. And now I saw that the girl in the corner had forgotten her boy lover and was crying silently; and now I saw that Kennedy's lips were closing and unclosing, and that his hands were gripped together and were trembling in the grip.

There was a sob in the woman's throat and a stay in her words; and then the sob was gone, and again she spoke. Now she made passionate intreaty that the sinner in the hall would repent that very night, and give up his soul at the penitent form; and now it seemed to me that with eyes that were wet and wistful she gazed along the room to the eyes of Kennedy.

"This night, sinner, this night and here, cast off your load. Kneel at this form, and pray for help and pardon; then stand and give thanks for the mercy. We will pray with you, sinner; we will praise with you, saved one. Oh, let not the time go; repent this night, this night and here," were the words of her intreaty; and at their end she still gazed along the room, and waited for an answer. There came the answer. For a moment Kennedy stood at my side, bowed and trembling; then in quick steps he went towards the platform, his hands outstretched and his face broken like the face of a woman in hysteria of shock. With look of joy and triumph she came to meet him, and took his hands in hers, and led him to the form to which she had pointed. Together they knelt; and she prayed aloud for mercy upon him and for the lifting of his sins; and with her prayers went up his sobbings and the Amens of the men and women.

They stood again, and faced the room; and I saw that he, the scoffer of an hour before, now shook and wept. And she, the girl, too, saw, and laid her hand upon his arm, and looked to him in beautiful compassion.

"Will you speak, brother," she said softly; "will you testify to the change you feel?"

He covered his face with his hands, and for a time was silent; then suddenly he lifted his head and began to speak. Uppermost in his mind was the memory of his book; and in a voice that sometimes broke and sometimes was clear he told the story. How that for months he had laboured to win fame for himself by bringing shame upon the Army, he told; how that his eyes had ever been blind to the good, his understanding ever sleeping; how that on this night he had come to scoff, but had mercifully been led to repentance.

"What shall I do, what shall I do to show this repentance?" he said, and looked appealingly to the girl.

"Brother," she said with a smile of rejoicing, "let the destruction of the book be your act of faith. Together we will burn it at the penitent form. Will it not be well, brother?"

"Yes, yes, oh yes," he said in wild earnestness, "I will get it, and we will burn it. Yes, yes, oh yes."

Hurriedly he left her and walked to where the book lay at my feet. Giving me neither word nor glance, he lifted it in his two hands; then turned, and carried it up the room. With quick touch he unloosed the tape and spread the bundle about the form; then paused as if he needed something.

"Here, brother, here," said a bandsman, and leant from the platform, and gave him a lighted match. Once more he bent to the form; with the flame he touched an overhanging sheet, and another, and another; his book began to die. A mood came to me, and I covered my eyes that I might not see.

Again I looked along the passage way. Many of the sheets were black and broken; the rest were burning to the blackness. A fragment, still white, floated across the people and fell by my side; unreasoningly I lifted it and placed it in my pocket-book. The mood returned; and I looked from the group by the platform to one and another about the room, and then to the boy and girl lovers in the corner. For moments I watched them as they leant together in talk of what had happened; then turned, and went through the doorway, and along the street. From the open windows there followed an uproar of praise; the book of Alistair Kennedy was dead.

EDGAR TURNER.

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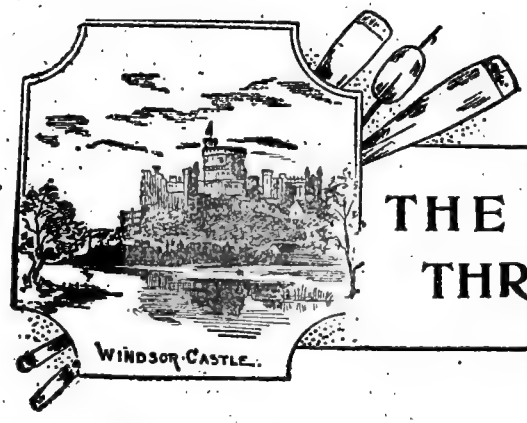
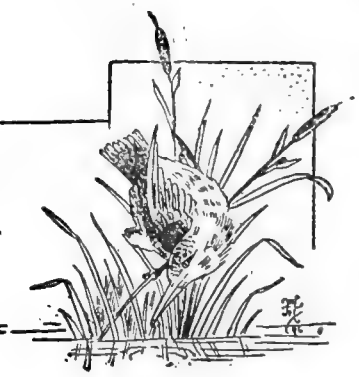


THE KNIFE THROWER.



I.

He had jet black hair and piercing dark eyes. He played the flute divinely. His sister, Babette, was beautiful. Her figure was of queenly proportions. No less regal was her face, duskily sweet and crowned with its diadem of wild tresses. It is hard to describe these Italian girls. They are women at sixteen and old crones at thirty. Their beauty is early, magnificent and—fleeting.

Babette had an angelic voice; she sang with Pietro's flute and twirled a little be-ribboned tambourine.

In a green sack Pietro carried ten long, slender knives. They were heavy and keen—these knives—and Pietro, standing twenty paces away, could throw them, one above another, into a chalk line on a board. Babette, standing before this board, still as beautiful as a statue, would suffer Pietro to throw his knives about her. The keen blades, flying like so many arrows from a bow, would quiver into the wood beside her, grazing her clothing, her limbs, her neck—so close that half an inch, in some instances, meant her life.

It was a daring feat, but Babette laughed at the white faces of the spectators. When it was done she would cry "Bravo!" and clap her hands.

They made money, Pietro and Babette. In their travels they came to Blythe. Woeful was their experience in that place.

II.

"He loves me, Pietro. Indeed, he told me so!"

"Love—*caramba!* Babetta, you are a silly fool. He—love! For every pretty face he feels the same—they have told me of it. You cannot count his love affairs on your fingers. There is no good in his woman's face—and let him take care!" Pietro's eyes flashed ominously and he clutched his bag of knives. "Think no more of him, Babette. I insist—I command you."

The dark, appealing eyes turned upward to her brother's assumed a hopeless expression. Babette dropped her head. Touched to the heart, Pietro came to her side and began toying with her wilful tresses.

"You know, little sister," he said slowly, "we are nothing but miserable musicians—poor, juggling strollers going from place to place in this wild country, earning whatever we can. What have we in common with such as he? Have we wealth, or rank, or anything that should attract him to us? Beauty you have, Babette, but beauty that might prove your ruin at his hands. No, no; think no more of him. He is fair-faced but false-hearted. He has followed us for no good end. This afternoon, Babette, we will play and sing at the hotel. Let us go in. We will stop here until to-morrow."

III.

He spoke Italian like all Englishmen, that is to say, miserably.

"Babette, I thought you had forgotten me, but I am happy to know I was mistaken. Why do you tremble, little one?"

"My brother," she murmured, looking about her apprehensively, "he is stopping in this hotel and—if he knew——"

"I do not fear a thousand brothers," he answered, laughing scornfully. "Love, my sweet girl, true love, is fearless. And you love me, do you not?"

He approached and looked into her eyes, hiding his tenderness under a careless air.

The two were conversing at one side of the hotel. It was the noontide hour, and the street was almost deserted. The few people who did pass and the merchant in the opposite shop saw nothing to excite their curiosity—merely a girl with a be-ribboned tambourine—a strolling Italian singer, such as they had often seen, talking with a half-jesting gallant. A flirtation between a passably fair musician and a well-dressed man with a feminine face. The passer-by and the merchant merely shrugged their shoulders and went about their business.

"Yes," she answered, curtaining her eyes with their lids and long, black lashes, while a rich colour came to her cheeks. Then she looked up quickly; "but, Pietro—he is very angry—he swears he will keep us apart even if he must commit—murder."

The last word had a quivering accent. "I am afraid—for you," she added, looking at him wistfully.

He smiled in his self-confidence.

"Do not fear for me, Babette. But come—you say you love me. Do you love me better than you do your brother?"

His look was half-doubting.

"Oh, yes, yes; but——"

"Is not my love stronger than that of a thousand brothers?"

"I believe it—I believe it—but I cannot leave Pietro.

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Who would sing to his flute and play the tambourine for him? Who would be brave enough to stand while he threw the knives? It would break Pietro's heart!"

"Very well; then stay with Pietro!"

He would have turned away, but her half-appealing gesture stopped him. He looked into her eyes. There was a battle in her breast and the deep agony of it surged in her face.

"I will go with you," she said simply.

A flush of triumph darted through his cheeks.

"My own Babette! You say you and your brother are to sing and play here this afternoon. Very good; I will come mounted and have another horse near at hand for you. We will watch our chances and flee. I trust your woman's wit to take care of Pietro. I will be a spectator at your performance, dressed as a cattleman. Do not let my disguise deceive you!"

"No disguise could hide you from me," she murmured.

He smiled again.

"Good-bye, until later, Babette."

"*A rivederci,* signor."

They parted.

Above them, at an open window, was Pietro. He had heard all.

IV.

"TAKE your tambourine, Babette,"

Pietro smiled as he spoke, and Babette got up from the steps where she had been sitting. A crowd was gathering about them, and at the first sound from Pietro's flute, some ladies came out on the balcony of the hotel. Prominent among the crowd was a roughly dressed man in a broad-brimmed hat. He rode a horse, and had drawn rein at the edge of the crowd.

"O luce di quest' anima,
Delizia amor e vita,
La nos tra orto unita
In terra in ciel sara!"

As Babette voiced her song her eyes sought the stranger in the rough dress. Pietro's quick glance passed from his sister to the man—but the notes of Pietro's flute did not waver. They came sweet and strong. Not so with Babette; her voice trembled as she sang:

"O, light of Hope, still animate
The heart whose faith is plighted;
In holy bonds united.
How blest our lot will be,
Reposing in our happy home
We'll calmly wait the morrow;
Or if thou hast a sorrow,
I'll share it, love, with thee."

The song finished, Pietro set up his board in a place where he had driven a post to support it. Then he untied his green bag and took out, one by one, his long, shining knives.

Babette ran to the board and drew a chalk-line; then Pietro threw himself forward, poising a knife by the blade, in his right hand. The knife flashed for a moment in the sun and then buried itself in the wood in the centre of the white line. After this, Pietro threw knife after knife, above the other, not a hair's breadth from the mark.

There was a murmur of applause. Pietro looked at the horseman—he sat motionless.

Babette ran and drew the knives, returning them to Pietro; then kissing her hand to the spectators, in the direction of the motionless horseman, she placed herself against the board—folding her arms.

Pietro stepped forward. He smiled as the spectators looked at each other apprehensively.

"*O luce di quest' anima,*" he sang softly, and hurled one shimmering blade.

A moment later the knife clung, shivering to the wood, at the girl's feet; another was planted at her knee and almost impaled the hem of her short skirts; another struck the board at her thigh; another grazed her arm; another settled into the wood above her shoulder, and so on until only two knives remained. Pietro had left a place for but one—directly beside his sister's left shoulder. Babette smiled from between the rows of shining knives. Pietro had made a mistake! Where would he put the tenth knife?

Pietro glanced at the horseman. He was still motionless, his face inexpressive. The crowd waited. Some of the onlookers had blanched faces and some affected carelessness. One lady retired from the balcony.

"*O luce di quest' anima,*" sang Pietro, springing forward.

The knife left his hand—his sister fell forward, leaving her outline traced in the mocking iron.

Women fainted on the balcony. In the crowd the awful catastrophe seemed to sap the springs of action. Men recoiled nervelessly.

Pietro threw up his arms and gave voice to wild Italian words. Then turning, he launched the tenth knife—and the horseman fell. Into the saddle sprang Pietro and before the onlookers regained their wits, he was gone!

V.

"WHEN the cause is lost, there is enough of words," say the Italians.

Whether Pietro by some dire accident, took the life of Babette, and, in his desperation, turned upon him who was to lure her away; or whether the double tragedy was brought about through design, calmly matured and carried out by superhuman will, may never be known, and it avails not to argue the matter.

A horse, easily identified, came back to Blythe the following day, bearing an empty saddle, and Pietro has never more been seen.

JULIA SCHLOMM.

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Pauper Blue Blood.

BY WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Author of "When the Birds Begin to Sing," "Through the Valley," "Six First-class Passengers," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

SEFTON RAVENSCROFT.—Son of the late Sir Reginald Ravenscroft and a pauper, owing to his father's failure.

GEORGINA PLUFF.—A governess in the family until Sir Reginald's death, when she intimidates Sefton into marrying her.

JOHN PLUFF.—A wealthy retired grocer, and cousin to Georgina Pluff (Lady Ravenscroft). In return for attendance at his dinners and At Homes, he supplies her with money.

MRS. RATHBONE.—A widow of whom John Pluff is rather fond, to the disgust of Georgina, who anticipates becoming his sole heiress.

LADY NORAH CANNINGTON.—In love with Sefton but who is compelled by her father to break off the engagement, owing to the former's poverty.

DUKE OF MALVERN.—Who is engaged to Lady Norah.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LITTLE STRANGER.

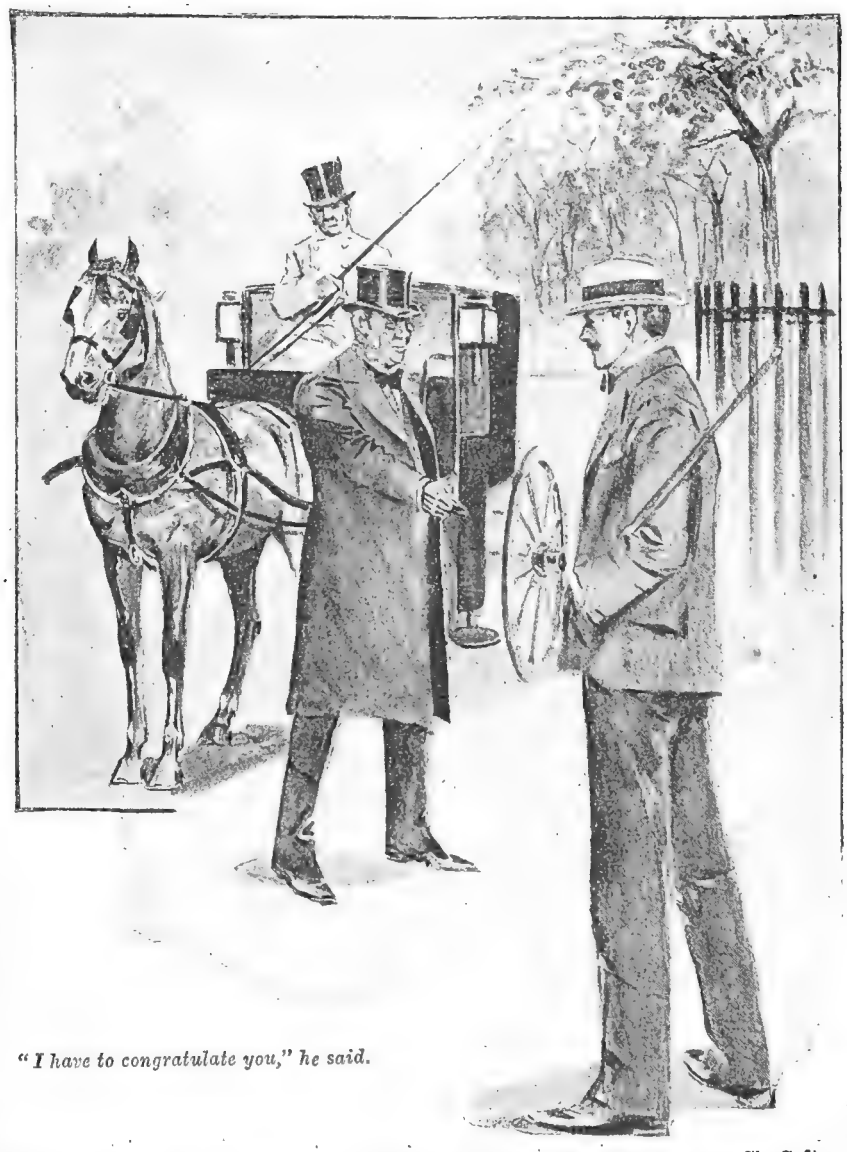
As Sefton walked slowly back to Ravenscroft Park, his feelings were a strange mixture of gladness and sorrow—joy, that Norah loved him still, and had stamina enough to boldly defy conventionality; pain, because he knew not sooner the great prize that might still have been his, but for Georgina.

He thought of the stir it would make when she flung up this great match for apparently no reason. How would her family take it? What would the world say?

Sefton had no thought to spare for the unhappy Duke of Malvern. He had always regarded him with utter disdain and contempt, as a miserable cur beneath his notice.

That Norah had been prevented in time from binding herself to such a husband gave Sefton infinite relief and satisfaction.

He was thankful his influence was strong enough to arrest this foolhardy marriage, to save his love from that worthless peer whom she could never even esteem.



"I have to congratulate you," he said.

The glamour of her presence was still upon Sefton—he could see again her sad, sweet smile, smell the odour of the lilies in her belt, trace the pattern of her hat's wide brim on the white forehead, from which the breeze blew back those tender locks of soft, curling hair.

He was intoxicated by his late proximity to the beautiful, pure being he had so ruthlessly condemned. To think he ever dared to call her faithless—"a creature without a heart"—when all the while her love lived on, though cowed and trembling, hidden in fear from a father's withering frown!

The knowledge of her fidelity, the unmistakable look he read in her adoring eyes—half shy of revealing the misery in their depths—gave Sir Sefton a certain pleasurable pain.

His step was more elastic than of late. He reacted every sentence that had passed between them, recalling Norah's gestures, her inflections of voice, as if she were beside him still.

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The walk home seemed no distance while his mind was thus busily occupied. As he turned in at the gates of Ravenscroft Park the sound of carriage wheels arrested his attention.

It was the doctor's brougham coming away from the house.

The coachman drew up at seeing Sir Sefton, and the doctor sprang out.

"I have to congratulate you," he said, "on the unexpectedly quick arrival of a splendid son and heir!"

For a moment the "happy father" did not speak; then he nodded, as if in reply to some comment on the weather, and conventionally inquired after his wife's health.

"You need not have the slightest anxiety, Sir Sefton, her ladyship is as well as can possibly be expected."

"Thank you."

No great sign of relief thrilled through the simple word.

The doctor supposed him to be taken aback, dazed with joy, and with a cheerful "good-afternoon!" drove away.

Then Sir Sefton walked on to the house to interview the future baronet.

After their parting Norah Cannington retraced her footsteps very slowly to Rosemont.

She wore a look of proud exultant triumph, for she felt at last that she was strong—no longer a wavering girl to be swayed by the will of others, but a woman who did not fear to strike for liberty and love. Though she had no right to cherish Sefton in her heart, she gloried in letting him see and know she was not the false thing his fancy painted. Victor and her parents were forgotten in the all-absorbing thought that she should be whitewashed in Sefton's eyes.

For a while she lingered in the Rosemont woods, dreaming of dead days, panting under her swelling burden of freshly awakened emotion.

At last a look at her watch and the nearness of the tea hour brought her back to the practical side of this very difficult resolve.

Of course, Victor must be told at once. He was coming down from town by the evening train to stay over Sunday, and her people also would require to know this important change of plans immediately.

It was positively alarming to think of their horror, and the hundreds of guests to postpone and scores of things to counter-order.

The idea was really too bewildering to contemplate! She pressed her hands to her forehead with a groan. What could she do with the perpetual stream of presents which had flooded Rosemont for the last month? They must be packed and returned, but the thought of it appalled her.

Still, all the trouble in the world did not matter now. If the walls of the old home fell about her head, and her parent's wrath burnt like fierce destroying fire, it were better than the inferno of a loveless marriage!

The vain glory and glitter of the Duke's gold faded before her awakened vision. She would remember Sefton's counsel —"be true to yourself."

Norah felt like a heroine as she approached the house, her excitement increased momentarily. She was going into battle, civil war! Staunch to her colours, she would die sooner than surrender. Her own courage fairly amazed Lady Norah. Could she be the same flesh and blood, the actual being, who allowed herself to be led to the stake, who signed her doom on the night of Sir Reginald's death? Time and experience had moulded her character, and surely changed her so completely that only a shadow of the old substance remained.

Braced for the encounter, she joined her family circle unblushingly round the tea-table, handed her father his cup without trembling, and sipped her own with unnatural calmness.

"There are some parcels for you in the hall, dear," said Lady Cannington.

"*More* presents!" thought Norah. "What irony, and at such a moment too!"

"I will open them later," she replied.

How quietly happy her parents looked, smiling benignly

She lingered in the Rosemont woods.

on their pretty daughter. It seemed almost a sin to ruffle their calm in this peaceful, twilight hour.

"Where have you been all the afternoon?" asked Lord Cannington.

"Wandering about, going the round of my old haunts——"

"To bid them farewell?"

"Oh, no," retorted Norah quickly.

"Of course not," added her mother. "There is nearly a week yet, and Norah has many more opportunities for rambles with Victor. He will be here to-night."

The mention of her lover sent a pang through the girl. She just remembered that she must cause him pain. Perhaps he would suffer as acutely as she had in the past.

It was a pity, but it must be done. She should hate wounding Victor, for he had been always considerate to her.

She decided that her wisest plan would be to break it to *him* first, and then let it filter out till it reached her parents. He would be very upset, and leave early the following day.

She pictured the scene. It must of necessity be extremely harassing and distressing for them both.

Lady Cannington placed her arm affectionately round Norah.

"I expect you are looking forward to Victor's arrival," glancing at the clock. "I really believe that I enjoy his visits as much as you do. He will make a delightful son-in-law—always so thoughtful for my every little want, very

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different to the modern type of selfish manhood. He deserves to be happy. Ah! Norah," catching the girl's wistful smile, "you do not know how you have pleased me in your choice of a husband."

"Really; but, remember, he is not my husband yet."

Lady Cannington tapped Norah's shoulder playfully.

"Well, you won't be able to say that much longer. I really think I should break my heart if anything came between you now. But it is not likely to. You and dear Victor are so thoroughly at unison."

Her words fell like lashes cutting Norah to the quick.

The girl flung her arms passionately round her mother's neck and kissed her many times. She could not speak, for she feared to betray her agitation. But it was too late to draw back. She had pledged her word to Sefton, break her engagement she must and would, before the dawn of another day.

While dressing for dinner, she saw the carriage drive up that had gone to fetch the Duke.

She finished her toilette hastily. Her white dress looked so terribly bridal, she told herself, as she swept down the broad staircase. In trepidation she awaited Victor, sitting by the open window, gazing in the direction of Ravenscroft Park.

So wrapt was she in contemplation that she never heard the young Duke enter the room and steal softly to her side.

"Norah!"

The sound of his voice startled her; she rose to her feet with a shiver, letting him kiss her through sheer force of habit without a protest.

The kiss did not repulse her, though it could never thrill.

Victor had a strangely gentle manner with women.

Norah regarded him critically.

He appeared in excellent mien. His face had filled out, there was a healthier colour in it. He looked broader across the shoulders than when she had first known him. People said he was immensely improved. To-night Norah agreed with them. There was a subtle change in her lover; He had developed from a boy into a man.

The bright light in Victor's eyes troubled her. Little he guessed how soon his ardour must be deadened! She tried to speak, but while he murmured lover's raptures the words were forced back in her throat.

At last she saw an opportunity—the moment had come to strike. She laid her hand tenderly, but firmly, on his shoulder, looking straight into his eyes with unswerving determination.

But the fates were against her, for as she opened her lips to speak Lady Cannington sailed into the room with a warm welcome for her future son-in-law.

"Perhaps it is better," thought Norah, "I will tell him in the garden afterwards, he will be stronger to bear it fed than fasting."

She avoided her father's eyes as they went in to dinner, for a wave of the old fear crept over her.

Lady Norah fully calculated the consequences of this enormous offence she had promised Sefton to commit.

No one remarked on her pallor, or the distrait air. People in love are forgiven much.

Victor was full of conversation, and his *fiancée* listened with her eyes fixed pathetically upon him. She was wondering how he *could* talk and laugh, with his doom so near. Surely he must feel some warning pang; a presentiment of danger ahead.

"By-the-way," said Lord Cannington, "I hear there is a son and heir at Ravenscroft, born this afternoon. How delighted Sefton will be!"

A sudden rush of hot colour flooded Norah's cheeks, and crept over her neck. The news gave her a strangely painful shock. Sefton, a proud and happy father. Bah! the thought sickened and revolted her.

She rose to her feet with a shiver.

It was all very well for him to talk, and pretend that he did not love his wife. For what other reason could he have married her? Now he was not contented with Georgina and his child, but must needs step in to ruin his old love's brilliant prospects; to make her a byeword amongst her friends, a black sheep in her own family; the talk and laughing stock of everyone! Norah knew Society so well—the unkind sayings, the misinterpretations it loves to place upon things it cannot understand. As likely as not rumour would declare that the Duke of Malvern had discovered a discreditable episode in Lady Norah's past, and thrown her over at the last moment. No one would really credit her with having jilted him, or if they did, she would be branded as a flirt and a fool. Surely she must have been mad that afternoon in the scented lanes, the victim of a morbid and unlawful passion, a tool in the hands of Georgina's husband, who was rejoicing to-night over the birth of his first-born!

What an infinity of worry and annoyance would be saved if, after all, she, Norah, failed to alter this existing arrangement. A sigh of intense relief broke from her, as she mentally reprieved herself.

"I must write and congratulate Sefton," declared Lady Cannington, little guessing how heartily she should have blessed that infant for bringing Norah to her senses.

In Lady Cannington's eyes it would have been nothing short of lunacy to relinquish the worldly benefits obtainable by marriage with the Duke.

So the evening passed peacefully away, and Norah sang love sonnets in a faint and weary voice, feeling herself a hopeless fraud, a deserter from the ranks of that civil war, which was to have broken upon Rosemont like a mighty storm.

She could not explain to Sefton the change this news had wrought in her, it must be left to his imagination.

Pleading fatigue Norah retired early, but her

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good-night smile was very sweet, softened by a new tenderness as Victor took her hand.

"He is too young to suffer," she thought. "I am glad I spared him."

"You are knocked up," he murmured concernedly; "you

Norah sang love sonnets in a faint and weary voice.

have been doing too much! How many letters have you written to-day?"

"Only twenty! But that was nothing; they were not very long, you may be sure. My walk this afternoon tired me. The sun was fierce and the air oppressive; I thought I should have fainted!" half closing her eyes with a little shudder.

"Did you go far, dearest?"

"No, but *quite* far enough."

Her words had a double meaning. The Duke was blissfully unconscious. "Sleep well," he said.

CHAPTER XV.

An Unwelcome Visitor.

As Sir Sefton looked at the tiny atom of humanity lying in its swing cot no flood of fatherly affection rushed into his heart. He wished now that the child had never been born, since its existence could only be another link in the chain that bound him to Georgina. *Her* blood flowed in the veins of the heir to Ravenscroft, and would descend to taint the strain from generation to generation—there lay the sting! The silken curtains of the cot he noticed were the Ravenscroft colours. It was only a small matter, but it annoyed him beyond measure. He longed to tear them down. His fingers instinctively tightened on the soft frills, but he pulled himself together, alarmed at the folly of his intended action.

"He's a beautiful boy," said the nurse.

"Beautiful!" incredulously ejaculated Sir Sefton, regarding his offspring with something of a sneer. "Oh, yes, of course!"

He turned away, ashamed to look his son's admiring attendant in the eyes. What if she read from the father's face the feverish workings of his excited brain?

The interview with Norah haunted him not unpleasurably, but with such force that at moments he forgot Georgina and the child stood between them, remembering only Norah was about to abandon the Duke, that her heart was all his—Sefton's—just as in the old days!

He waited in restless expectation for the announcements that the great wedding was not to be, spending his time in drawing mental pictures of the Cannington home circle now that the bomb had burst.

Even his horses were neglected, and a telegram, offering for one of the best, was never answered.

But as the days slipped by and no change in Rosemont arrangements were announced, a horrible doubt crept over Sefton. Could it be possible Norah was only playing with him again to pass an idle hour, acting a dramatic scene to stir the monotony of a quiet afternoon? Or, worse still, was it from a keen sense of cruel humour, or to make him ridiculous in his own eyes, that she had led him to believe in her once again? Fool that he was to fall into the trap—a dupe, a subject for sport, an object of derision!

Norah most likely walked away laughing, with just the faintest touch of pity for his blatant stupidity. "He thinks I am going to give up my whole future," she had probably said, with a shrug of her shoulders—"a brilliant career sacrificed to him!" Yes, the idea was strangely absurd; but *he* had credited it, hugged it to his empty heart!

The week slipped by. Oh, false Norah, you did not dream how subtly your rash promise was destroying Sefton's brain!

The wedding-day broke bright and sunny over the

He rode for the first time that week.

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country side. He heard the booming of jubilant guns, the clanging of marriage bells. They woke a dark feeling of despair in his soul, and, worse than sorrow, the overpowering passion of hate, coursing like fire through his veins.

He rode for the first time that week to try and distract his mind, but as he guided his horse in the direction of the station, passing under triumphal arches, and greeted on all sides by waving flags, it was hardly conducive to forgetfulness. Crowds of villagers with eager expectant faces were waiting to get a glimpse of the bride and bridegroom on their way to the train. A sense of deadly repulsion numbed Sefton as he heard a cry of: "Here they come!" and a moment later met the Duchess of Malvern's eyes as she was whirled past with her newly-made husband. He stared at her stonily without lifting his hat, though she lent forward and bowed sweetly, raising her eyebrows in surprise at receiving no response.

That was Sefton's only scrap of consolation as he returned to his wife's sick bed. But in the evening as he sat alone he thought long and seriously of the bride's astonished expression when he cut her that afternoon. A fear which only half expressed itself then, grew and developed momentarily till his brow was moist and his hands trembled. Had he in his over-wrought and aggravated condition of mind *imagined* the whole scene with Norah in the lanes? He was thinking of her so intensely as he walked past the Rosemont woods, and lately his brain had played him false on more than one occasion, that he stood now in perplexed wonder, pondering this terrible suggestion with parted lips and eyes widened with horror. Surely he had seen her, heard her, touched her, and yet her form began to take a shadowy appearance as he recalled it. Was it likely she would have spoken so strongly, and gone away to-day on her honeymoon without a word, a sign? At least, after such a conversation she must have written some explanation.

Occasionally this last month hallucinations troubled him. He fancied he saw his father standing behind Georgina's chair as she sat on the terrace in the twilight. The vision always faded when he approached, as if frightened of her living husband, or ashamed to meet the eyes of that son whom his folly had injured for life.

It depressed Sefton, sitting alone at night in the study that had once been his father's. He turned up the lamp to its brightest and wished that Douglas Shirling were with him.

He vacated the late Sir Reginald's chair, for a ghostly sensation oppressed him as of a second body forcing itself on to the seat.

"My nerves are cranky," he told himself; "it's a thousand to one I never met Norah at all that day. She was far too occupied last week to be wandering about alone and wasting her time with me, a poor, discarded lover—married into the bargain! It isn't at all likely."

So the housekeeper was seated beside him . . . chatting over old times.

The improbability of her vows assured Sefton of this fact. He sighed heavily.

His face was white with fear.

"Madness!" he muttered. "My God! — it *can't* be! There is no insanity in our family. My father killed himself deliberately and intentionally when his life became intolerable. He knew what he was doing, and I believe his head was never more clear than on that last night."

As Sefton spoke he traced a shadowy outline against the empty chair. The sight filled him with trepidation—he made a dash for the door and rushed wildly upstairs.

The following day he read the accounts of the wedding, and flung aside the papers in disgust.

"*Elle est virginale!*" he muttered with a hard laugh. "What a dream—what a myth!"

"Sir Sefton does not trouble himself about the baby," said the nurse in an injured voice. "He never comes to see it, or even notices it when I pass him in the garden unless I poke the poor dear infant under his nose."

"A most unnatural father," declared Lady Ravenscroft's maid. "But there! he's not what I call a family man. Don't seem to bother about his wife nor nothing, and wasn't even at home when the poor dear lady was at her worst. A fine fuss he would have been in, too, had he come back and found her gone. Them careless gentlemen always expect everything to go right, but her ladyship don't pamper him. He ought to be proud of this beautiful boy," bending down and making a horrible gurgling sound over the infant's face, which awoke a mirthless smile. "But his grandma hasn't been to see him either. Sir Sefton says it's because she

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isn't well enough—but it strikes me she takes the opportunity of being ill if there is ever any talk of her coming here."

With a wise shake of the head the maid hurried downstairs, only to return a moment later, with a message for Lady Ravenscroft.

"If you please, my lady," she said, "there's an elderly person at the front door, asking to see the heir. She says her name is Mrs. Leslie, and that she was housekeeper here before you was married."

Georgina turned fiercely—the housekeeper's insults on the day of Sir Reginald's death had rankled unceasingly.

"Don't let her in. She shan't see the child. Tell her to go away, she has no right here now, the impertinent creature! My doors are closed to Mrs. Leslie, at any time. Remember, she is *not* to be admitted!"

Georgina spoke excitedly, and fell back on the pillows exhausted by the effort.

"Very good, my lady."

The door closed and the maid delivered her mistress's answer in a modified tone to the indignant housekeeper.

"I'm not to come in! I as lived in this house for nigh thirty years, and now visits the Dowager Lady Ravenscroft regular once a month? Stuff and nonsense, young woman, there must be some mistake. I know the present Lady Ravenscroft is not very partial to me, but she can't prevent me taking a look at dear Sir Sefton's first-born."

"Why, Jenny, is that you?" cried a familiar voice, at the sound of which Mrs. Leslie's lips expanded into a broad smile. But as Sir Sefton advanced with outstretched hand she staggered back against the door, a cry of horrified surprise escaping her.

"Lor, now, Master Sefton, and what ails you?" she exclaimed, recovering herself with an effort, and advancing to scan his face more closely.

Could those be the same laughing, boyish eyes she had known in her old days, grown careworn and haggard? Was that white face, that weary langour, those lines about his mouth and eyes, the outcome of one year of matrimony?

"I—I am quite well," said Sir Sefton, a touch of annoyance in his tone.

"But you don't look it. Bless me if I ever saw such a change in anyone. But, there! you want me or your mother to see you takes care of yourself—you never was extra hardy." She spoke as if he were still a child.

"Don't trouble your head about me," retorted Sir Sefton lightly. "I suppose you have come to see the baby—eh?"

"Not sleeping well of a nights," murmured Mrs. Leslie, still regarding him furtively. "I know, and eating your scrap of bacon for breakfast and nothing more till nighttime. Just what your ma feared, poor dear lady!"

"To re-assure yourself come in and lunch with me. The gong's just sounded, and Lady Ravenscroft's soup has been taken up. Mary, lay an extra place for Mrs. Leslie. Come along, Jenny," taking her arm and dragging her somewhat unwillingly to the dining-room.

"I really don't like to, sir," she protested, "but, lor! you're just the same Master Sefton, and there's no gainsaying you."

So the housekeeper was seated beside him, and a very good meal he made, chatting over old times, with quite the former sparkle in his eyes.

"We will go up to the nursery afterwards," he said, "and you shall show me all the good points in my son that I have failed to discover."

Mrs. Leslie fidgeted uneasily, toying with her cheese.

"Lady Ravenscroft sent down word, sir, as how she did not wish me to see him."

"Oh! nonsense! Georgina's light-headed, you must not notice her."

In Mrs. Leslie's presence Sefton felt almost a boy again, and while these two were enjoying their friendly gossip, Mary, the maid, was repeating the incident to Lady Ravenscroft upstairs.

"It *can't* be!" Georgina cried, with flaming cheeks. "Sir Sefton is actually lunching in company with that abominable creature? Do my ears deceive me?"

"No, my lady, he's got her in as sure as sure."

Georgina clenched her teeth. She remembered the severe shaking she had received in the hour of her anguish from Mrs. Leslie's stalwart arms.

"Take this soup away, Mary, and bring me nothing more." As the door closed, the invalid gave vent to a hiss of rage. Her husband's action not only violated her snobbish notions of propriety, but cut and wounded her beyond measure. She could hear their voices as they ascended the stairs to the nursery. How pleasant Sefton could be when he chose!

"This way, Mrs. Leslie. What, caught your dress? Never mind, nurse will mend it!"

Georgina smiled bitterly.

"I should like to see nurse!" she thought. "They won't catch her dancing attendance on a housekeeper!"

Mrs. Leslie went into raptures over the size of the baby's limbs.

"And he's got a look of you about him, sir," she declared, "except for his eyes." She hesitated, as if deliberating whether to own an unpleasant truth. Then candour overcame her tact, while she murmured apologetically, pointing to the upper part of the face: "From the top of the nose he's a Pluff."

The words sent a pang of revulsion through Sefton.

"Yes," he retorted gloomily. "They are his mother's eyes."

(To be continued.)

JUMBLE STORY COMPETITION.

No. 7.

Six Prizes, one of £5 and five of £1 each, are offered to the competitors who most nearly put together the lines of the story appearing on the next page in their original order. Each line is complete in itself, but the title is jumbled up.

Cut out the lines separately, and paste them up in what you consider to be their correct, readable order on one side of the paper, and send the story in an envelope marked "Jumbled Story," to ***Short Stories***, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

All competitions to be in by Monday, August 17th.

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JUMBLED STORY No. 7.]

"THE DREAM OF AUTHORS."

It was a sultry day in July when I noticed that for the honour depended on my silence. And so I could obtain.

I have always taken a particular interest in the friendly policeman, whom I cultivated, informed me he wrote an ode to an actress.

She, poor girl, being in sore need of money, took it to his rooms in a back slum off the Strand.

I once knew one of these miserables who had an Eton shoulders, a white face, with high, intellectual-looking "Dreams," that is to say he was the writer of one of the vague rumours were spread everywhere, The public was thinking all day and all night; thinking and published nothing since his one great work. One day passed. Then I ran up to my friend's room.

For twenty years I had known him to be selling the manuscript.

As I was going up the rickety staircase, a strange called 'Dreams.'

I made a few purchases, and went round to his room. These were afterwards published in a book. It was 'Dreams.'

And what is more this man was the author of the Devil. There is only one way by which you may be exhausted.

"I went to a drawer in my table, and handed him whisky, and we would light a fire and chat together.

He took it, and without a word left the room.

"You saw the man who went out just now. He was my brother."

He had a mass of dark wavy hair hanging on his finger towards me.

I pulled my hat over my eyes, and waited until he had entered. "That man who went down? He was my brother.

The old man fell back on the pillows, and seemed something worthy of his reputation.

I would bring him a bottle of port, or some of my old twaddle.

This is the match-seller's story, and it seemed to have demanded that the author of "Dreams" should produce an agony of fear. 'You may have anything that you accused; I felt that all eyes were upon me as I went a day.

"He wanted to know whether I had ever written matches at his position in Fleet Street without missing it, and then spent half his fortune in advertising it.

The intensest excitement prevailed in literary circles; 'You—a thief. You, a Montgomery, a low down thief!'

I watch them as they stand on the pavement and stood there in the open door, and pointed an accusing inquiry, and preserve a woman's honour—you know her brother. The public are still waiting.

It was then found out that the poem was the merest everything. I have collected proofs. Answer me my silence. You know her, perhaps. The heroine of the manuscript for the publishers, when the door opened, finest works that ever mortal penned.

During that time I had become so acquainted and Christ Church education, and who had won by his together in a firm in the City. That was long ago.

A tall, well-dressed man was coming down, wearing a forehead.

"Did you see him," he cried, almost before I had begun, would be cut off. I fell at his feet.

My friend noticed the incredulous expression on my face. By speaking he could ruin me. My career, not yet long black coat.

"I was working in my room one evening, preparing its circulation for the next week was as much as that of selling matches. She looked at me with pity, and then previous day.

"'Geoff,' I cried, 'believe me——'

"'Pish!' he interrupted brutally. 'I would not rob their ill-clad bodies. Some of them have their stories.

"'Thief,' he hissed between his clenched teeth. Oh, the agony of it! But a woman's honour hung on about my duties. I did not mind, for I was thinking this: What were you doing at the hour when the cheque exhausted him. There is yet the sequel to be told.

It will be remembered that Geoffery Montgomery had suspected me of stealing the cheque. My brother had all the rest of its kind put together.

'"I looked up eagerly. Anything that would prevent thing happened.

"He interrupted me with a gesture.

Presently he told me his story.

"'There is only one way by which you may be saved,' and my brother stood before me. I see him now, as he was stolen?'

"'Well,' the old man continued, 'that woman's saved.'

"'I will give you everything that I possess,' I cried in with him that occasionally I persuaded him to take me to at my work, I was not brilliant. With my brother it had been found out, and I was shielding a woman's

"The old man pressed his hand to his forehead.

It was the reputed author of "Dreams!"

The magazine was an obscure little publication, but would let me have all the profits. He was very kind was different, and he was soon to be made a partner. I answer nothing. I was entirely in my brother's powers dreaming; occasionally I wrote down my thoughts.

It was for this reason that he had applied to his another book. He said that if I sold it to him he I received my dismissal from my employers. They remind me of her.

"A few weeks later she passed me in the street. I was the editor of a certain magazine. He paid her £100 for she threw me a copper. I have kept it, you see, in that is the old story. I was suspected, although I was not ask for. I will sell you my soul——'

"It was impossible for me to say. I was tongue-tied. I think you said, she was the heroine of 'Dreams'—there about the last chapters of my book.

"One day a cheque was missing from our office. It will take from you. That is—your book.'

"When Geoffrey and I were young men we worked my brother repeated. 'There is only one thing that I forgotten to speak for me. But I did not care. Nothing and generous. I wonder why?"

"'It is no good,' he said, 'for you to deny it. I know that the old match-seller had been taken ill on the shiver in their rags; as the fierce rain pours down on brain almost every honour it had been possible to name.

"I was ever a dreamer, and, although I plodded away could be no price too high to pay for that.

"My surprise may be imagined when the next morning first time the old man was absent from his post; a little velvet case on the wall. It is all that I have to toilers of the street.

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KEY TO JUMBLED STORY. No. 4.]

HER LOVE LETTERS.

"I WILL not give you back your letters," said he.

"But you have no right to keep them," said I, "now that you are not engaged to me any longer, Mr. Howard."

"Oh, my dear," he answered, "you cannot have all the advantage! You have jilted me, and you can say what you please, and I can prove the truth by our correspondence. I always kept the rough draft of mine, and there's no law in the land to make me give up my own letters."

"Gentlemen don't talk of law; they think of honour," said I.

"Ah, whatever you please, Miss Travis. I suppose the fact that my grandfather did not leave me his property has a good deal to do with things being as they are. Good-bye, Miss Travis."

But I must have my letters back, and that night as I sat up in bed I thought of the way to do it.

Ben—I mean Mr. Howard; he was Ben to me no longer—lived with Sally Grey's mother.

Sally was a girl you could trust. She was a plain little thing, with something the matter with her spine, but just as good as gold. I had told her everything, and now I intended to tell her the facts of the case and get her to let me go into Ben's room while he was away and look for my letters.

I knew that Ben—I mean Mr. Howard—was out by eight o'clock, and at nine I tapped on the basement window, and Sally, who was making a cherry pie, looked up and saw me and opened the door herself.

And then and there I sat down and told her all about it and about the letters.

"And I want you to help me to get them, Sally," I said. "To let me get into Mr. Howard's room and take what belongs to me. And you will, won't you?"

"It is a splendid idea," said Sally. "You'll have to wait until lunch is over, and Miss Peck and Mrs. Jones go out. Then mother will lie down for a nap, and Biddy will be getting things ready for dinner, and Sarah rubbing the forks and glasses. I'll get the pass key—of course we have one for every room. Now, do stay for lunch, darling."

And cold shivers ran up my back when Sally unlocked the door and we were really in the room—his room.

"I suppose he keeps the letters in his desk," said she. "I know he doesn't put them in his trunk, but this key unlocks all the drawers and desks in the house. We keep it to lend the lodgers when they lose their key-rings. Now, I shall lock you in and sit on the stairs to keep watch, though nothing can happen. I'll come for you exactly at four."

I drew a chair to the desk, sat down, and turned the key in the lock.

There was nothing inside but some notepaper, and a little package of "legal cap," and pens, and inkstand and a blotting-pad.

I shut the desk and looked in the drawer. There was a cigar box.

"Oh, dear," I thought, "where can I look now?" And I was about to try my key on the drawers when I heard the street door open and bang shut and feet ascend the stairs.

Then a key rattled in the lock, and I did the only possible thing to avoid discovery—at least for a moment.

There was a wardrobe cupboard with curtains before it. I ran towards it and stood bolt upright in the corner as Ben—I mean Mr. Howard—entered, followed by another man.

They shut the door and sat down. They lit their pipes.

"Ben," said the strange person, "you are not looking well."

"I'm feeling wretchedly," said Mr. Howard. "I wouldn't tell another fellow, but I believe my heart is broken—there, don't laugh. You see that photograph on the mantelpiece?

"We were engaged to each other," said Ben, "and I loved her better than my life, and I thought she was very fond of me. But you know how grandfather cut me out of his will, and then a rich old fellow began to call upon her, and she picked a quarrel with me—that's all. She's a mercenary little wretch, but I—I am a fool, Henry.

"I love her still. I shall keep her photograph all my life—and her letters to read and kiss—I would not give them up."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said this Mr. Henry—heartless brute!—"you'll find a better girl in no time."

"There is but one woman in the world for me," said Ben. "There now, I've done. You know my trouble. I'll hide it from the world, and you will never speak of it to anyone, I know."

"You'll not have any trouble in six months," said the horrible Mr. Henry. "Now, you'll come up and spend your holiday with me, won't you? I'll just step out and buy those things for my wife, and you pack up what you need and meet me at the station."

Then Henry walked away, and Ben—yes, Ben, my poor Ben—took a bundle of letters from his bosom and kissed them, and took down my photograph and kissed that, and then, having pulled a bag from the corner, he walked straight to the wardrobe and drew the curtain back.

The next moment he was staring at me and I at him.

"Is it her ghost?" I heard him say to himself, and I—well there I was—it was not a situation to impart dignity.

"It is only me in the flesh, Ben," I said. "I wish I was a ghost so that I could vanish. And now you can boast all your life, if you like—and I will say something. Firstly, I did not care about your grandfather's horrid money. Secondly, I—I—only meant to tiff a little—not to break off, only to frighten you. Thirdly, I—I—oh, I've found out that you really truly love me, Ben—and though it is broken off—I—I want to know—I used to love you very much—and I couldn't be going to marry old Mr. Javerell, because he is engaged to my Aunt Ophelia, and he never wanted me. I came to get my letters, but you may keep them. I—I've misunderstood you, and though we part for ever, forgive me, Ben."

And Sally was my bridesmaid when I married, and is to-day my dearest friend, and the only one who knows how Ben and I came to make up our quarrel.

JANE SUMMERS.

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THE SACRIFICE OF NATHAN BAXTER.

A Lancashire Story.

I.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning, and the July sun poured down in a fierce, blinding glare. The river murmured along under the old grey stone bridge, kissed by the bright green alders which bent lovingly over its sparkling bosom; and between the heat and lack of custom, old Jerry in the whitewashed toll-house had fallen fast asleep.

The village of Wenley seemed also to be asleep, for no sounds of life were heard save the rattle of a mowing machine and the clang of the blacksmith's hammer. The high road stretched away in a long white streak, and the rich green of the hedgerows was hidden by the fine white dust which settled upon the leaves, and marred the brilliancy of the poppies along the roadside. The few sweets in the window of the post-office looked sticky and unpalatable, and the dogs lay panting in the shade; the roses drooped in the little gardens, and nothing seemed to flourish save the glaring sunflowers.

It really was very hot, as old Nathan Baxter shuffled along the village street, leaning heavily upon his crooked stick, nodding, smiling, and stopping now and then to exchange a few words with the folks, or playfully prod a sunburnt urchin with his stick. A queer figure he cut with his wrinkled face, and short, grey hair, his slim form and rusty black coat, and thin, bent legs cased tightly in corduroys and leggings—for he had spent the best half of his life on horseback, and in his old age he wore the garments he had been used to.

Slowly he shuffled down the road to widow Hinchcliffe's cottage. Phœbe was feeding a swarm of hens and chickens as he came up.

"Mornin', Phœbe," said he.

"Mornin', Nathan," returned she.

Then there was a silence for a minute or two as Nathan leant upon the gate and surveyed the brood.

"Nice hens them," said he at last. "Dun they lay well?"

"Ay, pretty fair," said Phœbe; "but are yo' not comin' in aat o't sun?" and she led the way into the cool kitchen followed by the old man.

"Phew! grand weather for the crops," said he, as he sat down by the door; "where's thi mother?"

"Hoo's i't shippon, somewhear," responded the girl.

"Ay, to be sure;" and he relapsed into silence again, watching the girl's deft fingers as she folded up some newly-washed clothes. Phœbe Hinchcliffe was a pleasant, fair-haired girl of twenty-one, a very fair sample of the average English country girl. Nathan would have called her beautiful, but then he did not look at her with the eyes of an ordinary observer. He had watched her grow up since she was a playful little brat of five who used to steal his pipe, and hide his stick as he sat and talked with her father; and so when Fred Hinchcliffe went to the churchyard, he, Nathan, looked upon himself as somewhat responsible for little Phœbe, and as she grew up and blossomed into womanhood, the old man grew prouder and prouder of her, and in his eyes there wasn't a girl in the village "could hold a candle to her," as he expressed it.

By-and-bye, however, he broke the silence:

"I say, Phœbe, when're yo' and Tom Crossley goin' to be wed?"

"Eh? I dunno."

"Yo' dunno! that's quare; ain't he axed yer?"

"Well, mebbe he has."

"Well, what dun yo' mean by yo' dunno?"

"It's this way, yo' see" (she used to call him "Uncle" sometimes), "Tom's savin' up; and when he's enough money to set up a-farming we'll be wed."

"And how long do yo' reckon that'll be?"

"Two or three year, mebbe."

"Eh, dear, but that's a great while."

"Not it," put in Mrs. Hinchcliffe, who came in at this moment. "I dunno what hoo wants gettin' wed at all for; leastways for the next five or six year. How dun yo' think I'm to manige this farm all by miself. Sich nonsense!"

"He, he!" chuckled Nathan; "ye didn't think it sich nonsense when poor Fred Hinchcliffe axed yo' to marry him, did ye now?"

"Humph!" responded the widow. "Fred had a house to put me in, and Tom Crossley hasn't."

"But," said Nathan, "I reckon that's not Tom's fault."

Poor Phœbe sighed over her clothes.

"Well, I'll just drop down to Owd Jim's and get mi beer, and then I'll be off whoam."

It was noticed by the landlady at the "Lion" that day that Nathan, contrary to his usual custom, sat and drank his beer and smoked his pipe without saying a word to anyone, and then emptying his mug and knocking the ashes out of his pipe, he ejaculated: "Hang me! I'll do it," and stumped off.

It did not take him long to reach his little two-roomed

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cottage down the back lane; and after he had eaten his usual meal of bread and cheese he lit his pipe, sat down by the door, and gazed out over the fields with a look of deep thoughtfulness. Presently he rose, looked up and down the lane, and then closing and bolting the door, he shuffled into his bedroom. Nathan did not boast much furniture, and beyond the bed, a chair, and a cumbersome old chest of drawers, there was scarcely anything in the room. To the chest of drawers, however, Nathan bent his steps, and, after much fumbling, drew forth a bag from the bottom drawer.

"Funds is gettin' low, Nathan," said he, peering into the bag; and then, sitting on the chair, he emptied the contents upon the bed, displaying a little heap of gold and silver. Then he began to count, and for a while there was a steady chink of gold in the room. "Forty-five pun eleven shillin's," said he at last; "wouldn't last long—only a couple of years, mebbe, then ye'd *have* to go, Nathan. Ye mut just as weel go now. Ay, ay! ye've lived longer'n ye thowt, Nathan. Ay, ye'd better go now." Then he separated the silver from the gold, and counting out ten sovereigns, he put the rest back into the bag, and tied the string tightly round the mouth.

That evening, as the setting sun was gilding the gables of Mile Bank Farm, toning the whitewashed walls with its mellow radiance, and converting its latticed windows into splashes of orange fire, old Nathan stepped over the threshold.

"Evenin', Ned," said he to Mr. Crossley, who sat smoking in his ancient chair.

"Why, bless me, Baxter, is that yo'?" said Mr. Crossley.

"Ay," returned Nathan, seating himself, and nodding familiarly to the other occupants of the kitchen. "Hev ye getten yer hay in yet?"

"Verra near," returned the other.

"Good crop?"

"Pretty fair," and the two men relapsed into silence.

"Wheer's Tom?" at last broke out Nathan.

"He's at t' back somewhere," said Mr. Crossley; and Nathan, picking up his hat and stick, sallied forth in the direction indicated.

He found Tom seated upon the shaft of a cart, mending some harness.

"Hullo, Nathan!" said Tom as he came up.

"How d'ye do?" said Nathan; "how's business with ye?"

"Pretty good," responded the other. Then the old man pottered round the pigstyes, peeped into the cow shed, and stroked the watch dog, looking furtively every now and then at Tom. At last he came back and took a seat on the shaft beside him.

"Say, Tom, when're yo' and Phœbe goin' to be wed?"

The young man looked steadily at Nathan for a few seconds before he answered: "Just as soon as I can."

"Savin' up, aren't ye?" queried Nathan.

"Ay," responded Tom, "and it's slow wark, too."

"If ye had £40 now, d'ye think ye could manage it?" said the old man, shifting nervously in his seat.

"Jist you try me," said Tom with a grin.

"Mebbe £35 would do," said Nathan.

"Mebbe it would," said Tom, "I'd try it."

"Well, there, by Gosh! try it!" roared the excited old man, throwing the leather bag at the feet of the astonished Tom, and striding away towards the pigstye, chuckling as though he would burst.

Tom looked from Nathan to the bag, and finally picked it up, opened it, and counted out the gold—£35.

Now Nathan had the reputation of being "pretty well off" in the village, as he had lived there for the last seven or eight years without doing a stroke of work of any description, and never seeming to want for money. He was generally supposed to have rich relations in Bracebridge—the market town ten miles away—though no one ever saw any of them. However, they thoroughly believed the old man to have plenty of money, so that Tom did not feel so surprised as he might have done at the unexpected turn of fortune's wheel.

At last the old man came back.

"Is this for me?" asked Tom.

"Who else d'ye think it's for?" queried Nathan; "but I say, Tom, d'ye think as ye can get the weddin' o'er in a month or two, as I'm going to mi friends in a month or two, and I want to see yo' and Phœbe wed before I go?"

"Goin' to leave Wenley?" said Tom, aghast.

"Ay; ye see I'm gettin' owd, and it's not good fur a man to live all by himself at my time o' life, so I'm goin' to mi reelashuns."

"Well, God bless ye, Nathan!" said Tom as he seized the old man's hand.

"Hush, lad!" said he; "promise me as ye'll not say anythin' about it, and get wed as quick as ye can." And the old fellow shuffled off down the road with his head high in the air, and a smile upon his wrinkled face, chanting in a thin, cracked voice: "Fol-de-rol, tol-de-rol, tol-de-rol, ay!"

II.

THE bells of Wenley church rang out with a deafening crash, scaring the lapwings as they wheeled across the bare cornfields, and drowning for the moment the song of a soaring skylark, as a little procession issued from the old ivy-grown porch. First came Tom Crossley, radiant in a silk hat, and smooth, broadcloth coat, and on his arm, in a simple country-cut gown of white muslin, leant Phœbe—now Mrs. Crossley. Behind them followed Nathan Baxter, tricked out in his best, flanked on one side by the widow Hinchcliffe, and on the other by the buxom form of Mrs. Crossley, whilst behind them beamed the jovial visage of Mr. Crossley, in the midst of a goodly number of farmers and housewives, and lads and lasses.

I will not attempt to describe how the foremost pair of the little procession were pelted with rice and slippers during their short walk from the church to Tom's farm, the speeches that were made after breakfast, the toasts that were drunk, or how old Nathan in the fulness of his joy sang the "Vicar of Bray," or how old Jerry the toll-keeper fiddled until his "E" string broke, and the company danced till they were fain to stop from sheer exhaustion; but as the clock in the church chimed two, and the moonlight cast long shadows athwart the lane, old Nathan ambled homeward in a rather erratic fashion.

* * * * *

Next evening, as the sun was setting down in the west, casting a glamour over field and hedgerow, lending a beauty even to grimy brick tenements, and transfiguring the telegraph wires into threads of burnished gold, Nathan stepped through the gateway of the Bracebridge Union Workhouse. A little parley with the gatekeeper and he was shown up to the governor's room, and as he stumped along the cheerless corridor he chuckled: "He, he, he! By Gosh, I did 'em that time! Gone to me relashuns—he, he, he!"

GEORGE H. ELLIS.

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SWEET RESOURCE.

"And she left him at once, of course," said Bramley, stroking his moustache in slow and meditative fashion.

"Left him?" repeated the little lawyer, with a low chuckle. "Left him? My dear fellow, where did you get your education? Just tell me that. Do you know anything about the kind of women that allow men to throw them down and walk over them, and even dance on them for pastime? Such women have to be thrown out of a fifth-storey window, and to have their heads smashed open before they conclude to give up caring for a man. I don't say that it went that far with Millicent Hastings. She loved that brute, and she'd been brought up with certain old-fashioned ideas about wifely duty."

"What did he marry her for; her money?" asked Bramley.

"Don't ask me," the lawyer laughed.

Both men were silent for a moment. It was a sultry June afternoon, and they sat looking out of the window of their club at a few slow-faring carriages. A victoria passing with a single occupant caught their attention.

"By George!" said the little lawyer emphatically. "By George! Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their—silk petticoats. Millicent Hastings!"

"In that carriage?" queried Bramley.

"In that carriage, as sure as my name is Lloyd. She looks well, too. You wouldn't think she'd been through so much. Well, well, well!"

"She looks like a good woman," said Bramley. "You think she walked straight in spite of all?"

Lloyd put up his hands in mock despair. "What do I know? She's married again. Got a good fellow for a husband—Western man. Name of Weatherly. I don't suppose she cares so much about him as she did about Hastings; women never go crazy about steady, good husbands."

"Tell me the story you were going to tell. That is if talking isn't too warm work for you just now."

Lloyd fell back in his chair and reflected.

"It's six years ago," he began slowly, "since I first met Millicent Hastings. They'd been married six months, and were rather keeping in quiet because of her relatives. It seems she was an orphan, and she married without the consent of an aunt who was going to leave her some property. However, as Millicent was twenty-two or more that didn't especially matter. Hastings had been speculating and had lost heavily. He was in a shaky condition financially and pretty badly unnerved, and came to my office in that condition one afternoon. I was out, and he left a note asking me for Heaven's sake to call at his house that afternoon if possible. Of course I made it possible, and got there at eight. I'd never been there before, and had only a vague idea that he lived in a fashionable apartment house near the park. It was a nice place, I found, a very nice place—quiet and well arranged. I went up to the sixth floor, and rang the bell. The door opened presently, and showed me a small, queer figure that I took to be that of the maid. 'I—I don't know,' she stammered, when I asked to see Hastings. 'He hasn't come yet. I hope he'll come very, very soon. I—I am so nervous.' Then I knew it wasn't the maid. She had a low, musical voice, peculiarly sweet and cultivated. 'This is Mrs. Hastings?' I inquired. 'Yes, yes; you must excuse my appearance. Pray step into the drawing-room. I sent away the maid yesterday, to economise for the present—while my husband's affairs are uncertain; and—and I've been working so hard to-day—and I don't know how to do anything, unfortunately.'

"By this time she had turned up the gas and I could see a very beautiful young face, flushed scarlet with heat and exertion, and with an accidental streak of coal black on one soft cheek. Her eyes were black and had a strange look of feverish excitement; and she wore a plain little gingham frock and had a towel for an apron. Her head was covered with a handkerchief, and altogether she looked as if she had been having a pretty hard time of it. There was a catch in her voice every time she spoke. 'I don't know,' she said, 'why he hasn't come. He comes home very late nowadays. I suppose he is so worried.'

"I couldn't help feeling a queer sort of pity for her, though for what reason I could not exactly explain. Just then another ring took her to the door again. This time it was a messenger boy. I could hear her ask eagerly for the ticket to be signed, and then the sound of the door closing and the tearing of an envelope. After a few seconds of strange silence she came back. I couldn't tell whether I imagined it, or whether she staggered. At all events, her face had a most pitiful and terrifying expression; I sprang up and caught her arm.

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"'Sit down,' I said. 'Have you heard bad news?'

"It seemed as if she couldn't control her throat. Then after a moment of effort she said faintly and with a ghastly smile—'I—I—it's nothing. Only—only I thought it was a message for me from—from my—from Mr. Hastings. And I—I opened it—and it was not for me—but for him.' 'Nothing serious about that,' I said lightly. 'Oh, no,' she grasped, 'no, nothing so serious.' But I noticed that she clutched at the letter desperately and seemed to want to hide it even from herself. I wouldn't have been human if I hadn't felt curious about that letter."

Bramley cleared his throat and said mildly as the other paused for a moment:

"Letter from another woman, I suppose."

"It didn't occur to me," said Lloyd, with a smile, "and yet this was precisely the case."

"Go on," said Bramley, bridling a little over the fact of greater perspicuity than the lawyer had shown.

"Well," continued Lloyd, "there she sat, clutching the letter and looking—I can't tell you how she looked, but there was something terrifying about it to me. I don't know how long we sat there in silence—an uncomfortable kind of silence too, I must confess. But finally there was the click of a key in the door and the door opened. Hastings came lumbering into the drawing-room a moment later. He was a large man, tall, and well built. His face darkened at the sight of me, strange to say. And this nettled me. 'Look here,' said I, 'I'm in a great hurry. It was out of my time coming here to-night, but your note seemed imperative. Now, if there's anything so very pressing, I'm here; if not I must get away to my own home.' The woman got up and went slowly from the room. I thought she walked unsteadily. Hastings answered me in a thick sort of voice. I guessed at once that he'd been drinking. He wanted me to draw a bill of sale, he said, of a lot of personal property. I saw that he wasn't in a mood for business, and I made him a promise to be at my office at nine the next morning, and took a hasty leave. I was so upset by the curious appearance of his wife that I forgot to take with me the stick I carried, not an inveterate habit of mine, but only an occasional one. It was a stick that had just been presented to me, and when I reached the street entrance I remembered it and went back. Just as I was about to ring a sound startled me—a muffled kind of a scream. Then a heavy sound of something or somebody falling on the floor. I rang violently. Rang and kept my finger on the button, determined if he was beating her to scare him from it. I kept on ringing until the door was opened—by Mrs. Hastings. She had her hand pressed to her side, and there was blood from a small cut on the forehead. 'I left my stick,' I said. 'But what is the matter?' She could hardly speak. 'Nothing—I—just had a fall—tripped up over a—a hassock. It is nothing.' I looked at her with mingled pity and anger. It enraged me to hear her lie about it. Hastings' voice came thickly from the rear of the hall. 'You——' he used an oath and an uncomplimentary name, 'you will rob me of my letters, will you? I'll break your head.' I caught the woman by the arm, and dragged her sharply out into the hall. 'Look here,' I said, 'do you mean to let him kill you? He has struck you. Why deny it? Why allow it?' She began to tremble and shake hard, like an ague sufferer. 'Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do? I didn't know the letter. I didn't suspect. I thought it was a message for me from him—and such a letter! Oh, heavens! She calls him her darling love! What shall I do? Where shall I go?' 'Have you no friends at hand?' I asked. She made no reply to this. We heard his footsteps. 'Yes, yes; certainly,' she began to say aloud, 'yes, I will get your stick. How fortunate that—that you remembered. You might have been worried.' She ran back into the drawing-room to fetch it. 'Yes, yes,' she cried wildly, 'you might have been worried,' she ended with a peal of hysterical laughter, and shut the door sharply upon me.

"I stood irresolute a moment, heard Hastings' voice, loud and threatening, a sound as of a chair overturned, and then I hurried away down the stairs, not waiting for the lift."

"I think," said Bramley, "I'd have wanted to stay and see the fun out."

"Fun! Hastings came late to his appointment with me the next morning. 'My wife is ill,' he said. 'She had a fall, and the doctor says there's a bad internal injury.' He looked at me with the sad expression of a kind and affectionate husband, and I felt like kicking him out of my office. But I didn't. 'What's the paper you want drawn?' I asked. He began to explain that it was some personal property he wished to transfer to a lady. He gave me her name, and I took a memorandum of the items, and promised him the paper at three in the afternoon. About an hour later a messenger brought me a note scrawled feebly in pencil; 'I am very ill—perhaps dying. Wish to make a will. Can you please call. Millicent Hastings.' Of course I went to see her. The poor woman was too badly done up to speak. I made the form of a will for her and she signed it, leaving all she possessed to her husband. A couple of women neighbours witnessed it, and then I had a moment to speak with her. 'Oh, I'm dying,' she said, 'I'm dying. And I'm glad; it's my only resource and it's sweet. Let me die and be at rest. I am glad to think of dying. He will not care. He has another woman, the one that wrote that letter.' 'Tell me one thing,' I said, 'her name.' She hesitated with a queer sort of shame and faltered over it. 'Alicia Gross,' she whispered. It was the name of the woman he had made the bill of sale to. A sudden anger seized me. 'You are doing wrong,' I said, 'to shield him and to make a will for him.' 'Am I?' she smiled faintly. 'Well, let me die and go to rest.' She turned her face away and seemed to swoon. I called the women back and came away. She was dying, I thought."

"But she didn't die," said Bramley musingly.

There was a long silence. Lloyd seemed to have fallen into a dream. "No," he acquiesced finally. "No, she got better, got well, forgave him, helped him in his business by selling some property, was good and patient and loving to him—until the day when she met him arm in arm with Alicia Gross; the two were coming out of a hotel. She stood and looked at him for an instant, then passed on. She never went back to the house—not even to take her clothing. She took the first train to her aunt's. A few weeks later she came back to the city and began a divorce suit. Of course she would have won, only——"

"Only what?"

"Only Hastings was kind enough to die in the meantime. And in due course the widow became Millicent Weatherly."

"All's well that ends well," said Bramley. "But I must be going now."

H. TOWNSEND.

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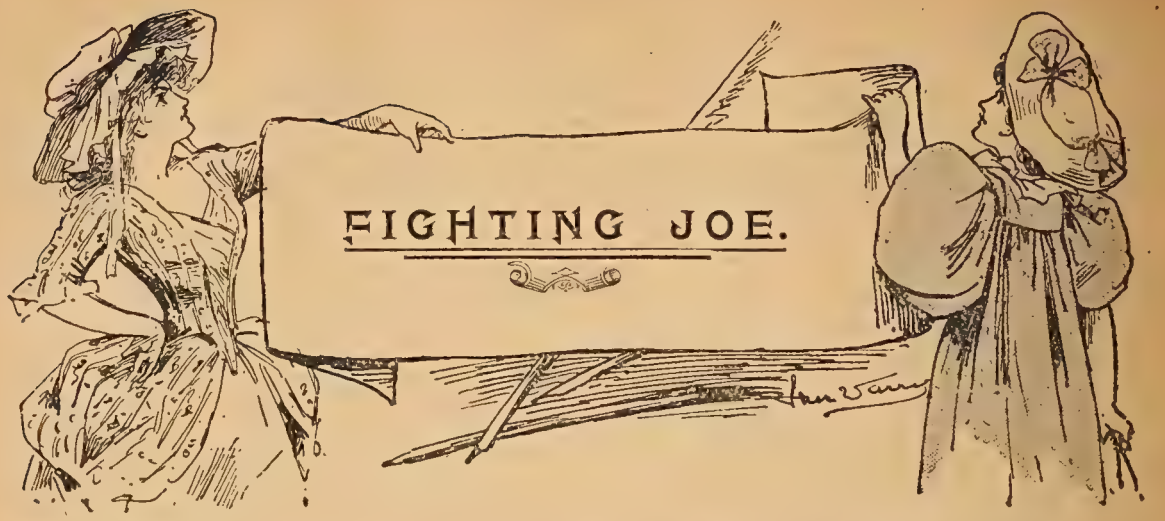

FIGHTING JOE.

"WHO and what was he?"

I was standing in the churchyard of a small town on the borders of South Staffordshire one bright Sunday afternoon in April not many years ago.

I was a stranger in that part of the country, and was passing through the place in the course of a long walk from the larger adjacent town to which my business had taken me the day before.

The extensive mining operations of the last twelve or fifteen years had altered the unpretending place materially; and though the quaint old church and some long and low buildings, suggestive of farms and homesteads, still retained an air of rustic simplicity, they were being gradually obscured, and the place itself sophisticated by the formal rows of plain and ugly tenements, built expressly for the mining population, which, every year, was becoming more and more numerous.

I had amused myself by deciphering some of the inscriptions on the gravestones, well-nigh obliterated by the weather-stains and the moss that time had suffered to find root-hold in the hollows of the lettering, when a man, presumably a miner, in the Sunday clothes peculiar to that class, carrying a little child of two or three years, and followed by another, somewhat older, seated himself on a flat stone, and opened a conversation.

A civilly-spoken fellow enough, though with the uncouth accent of the country.

I readily accepted the invitation he offered, and we chatted pleasantly.

He had known the place many years, he told me, ay, long before it had grown into the town it now was—when it was nothing but a humble village, and when the long grass or ripening corn bowed its head to the wind on the spot where the unsightly engine-house and tall, red, chimney now stood, and where the heaps of slag and cinder marked the busy life of the toilers in the earth below.

That handsome marble monument, he told me, denoted the last resting-place of the late rector, and this broad, massive piece of granite was the tomb of a certain local squire, popularly known as "Squire Jack," who, it seemed, was much given to horse-racing, cock-fighting, and such kindred sports, and who, being a sad "ne'er-do-well," a thoughtless, reckless fellow, but withal, good-natured and easy-going, was, as such gentry not unfrequently are, the most popular member of his family.

As my new acquaintance pointed out these objects, and others, which he thought, I suppose, would interest me, he had risen from his seat, and we had strolled through the churchyard.

It was in a corner, and rather in a hollow, that, before a humble mound of green turf, and decked with the pretty spring flowers, carefully placed in the form of a cross, we both, as of one accord, paused. It had not any gravestone, but only a piece of wood, supported by two short uprights. On this was roughly carved, as if with a pocket-knife, these two words: "Fighting Joe."

"That is a strange inscription to put over a man's grave," I said. And then added: "Who and what was he?"

The man seated himself on a stone close by, and was silent for a few seconds.

He had set down the child he had been carrying, and the two little children, attracted by the bright flowers, had found their way to the mound, and were about to gather them.

"Here, you mustn't touch them flowers," he said, and, taking a hand of each, led them away.

"Well, mate," he then went on to say to me, in reply to my question, "I don't rightly know who or what he was. He was a stranger down here, and neither me nor my mates ever heard tell where he came from or who he was.

"When this here pit, Fenton's Pit, we call it, was first worked, we had but few hands hereabouts, and men as could work had no call to wait long for a job, and got good wage as well. Most of the hands were Staffordshire, but we never knowed where Joe came from, and I don't know as we asked, and p'raps he wouldn't have told us if we had.

"He was quiet and lonely-like, and said but little—that is, when he was all right; but when he'd had a drop of drink, as may be of a Sunday night, when he had gotten his wage, of all the hands I ever see to swear, spend his money, or fight, there wasn't one like Fighting Joe."

"And hence his name, I suppose?" I asked. "And of course, it is the old story again—drink, a quarrel, and a violent death; though I cannot understand, in that case, the evident care that is bestowed on the poor fellow's tomb—such as it is."

"No, sir," the man said gravely, after a moment's

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pause; "not quite all that. A violent death, yes; and such a death as I might pray God might ne'er happen to the worst of us; but it wasn't drink, nor a quarrel, nor a fight with another man, that brought him to it. It was more the other way, poor lad—more the other way."

The rough fellow beside me said this with a gentleness of tone and manner that was sufficiently out of keeping with his appearance to excite some degree of curiosity, and I told him I should like to hear more of the story.

"It's not much as such as you might care for," the man replied.

"Here," he said, turning to the little ones, who were straying towards the green mound again, "you mustn't touch them posies, thou knowest; go and get some of them," and he jerked a small piece of coal he had in his hand towards where some daisies and dandelions were growing in among the rank grass.

"He worked in Fenton's Pit along o' me, an' though we never had angry words, many an' many a day would pass and neither him nor me would speak. He was quick, as I said, and when he hadn't had drink would keep hisself to hisself. There was a lass living in these parts then, and Fighting Joe was fond of her. I don't know that he had said much to her, but we could see he was about as fond of that lass as a lad could well be. I know that, for mother was living then, and this lass would often be between her house and ours.

"It seems that one Sunday, as it might be this, Joe had met her, and told her how fond he was of her, and asked her to become his wife. She told mother this that same night. Well, it seems she said that Joe mustn't look for that, for she was already promised, and was going to be wed that Whitsuntide. When she told Joe that, he never said a word, but he grew very white in the face, and turned quietly away.

"The next day he had to work beside the very man who was promised to the lass he loved. Well, they had been at work for some time, when Joe's mate, turning round to get hold of a shorter pick that was lying near, sees him standing behind him with his arm raised, and the pick in his hand, as if in doubt whether to strike or not, and with a look in his eyes as he had never been known to wear before.

"The two men looked at one another, without speaking for a while, till Joe said: 'God forgive me!' and turned away, and from that day they never worked side by side again. I don't know how it was but we used to think Joe kept away on purpose—I mean, so as not to be in the way to strike the other one. That would be a matter of three or four months before the fire."

"What fire?" I asked.

"What fire?" the other repeated, in a tone of astonishment. "Why, Fenton's Pit. Did you never hear of the fire in Fenton's Pit?"

"No," I replied; "you know I am a stranger here."

"Ah, you must be, I should think," the man said, somewhat roughly, "if you never heard tell of that."

He took a small blackened pipe from his pocket, and filled the bowl in a mechanical way, for his thoughts were evidently far away, and his face became saddened and almost tender in its expression under their influence.

He remained silent so long, that I said: "I should like to hear about that fire, if you don't mind telling me."

"Was you ever down in a pit, mate?" he asked.

I told him no, but had often thought I should like to see one.

"Better stay where you are," the man answered.

"Ah!" he added, after another pause, "it's strange how we mining people die; but it's stranger how we live!"

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"I've worked in the pit for more nor twenty years," he replied; "but I never go down in the cage now—that is, since that time I speak on—but I think I may be going to my grave. What with the rising of the water, or the fall of the coal, or the choke-damp, that means death, the lives of such as us ain't worth much; but all these put together ain't nothing to a pit on fire.

"When the coal is bursting out with heat, and the heavy masses of earth fall down, crushing or laming them that can't get out of the way—when the cry is: 'Every man for himself, and God above for us all!'—when, fainting and struggling, they think for a moment of wife and children, and then they fall and die!

"Well, that was the sort of fire I speak of, and all of those at work in the pit that day rushed for the lift that might carry them up away from the place where the flames were roaring and rushing with the noise of a great wind.

"Well, Fighting Joe was the last man in the lift, as they thought; but just as they were beginning to move, they heard a loud cry for help, and they saw that other one—him who had married Joe's sweetheart—making for the lift, and begging them, for God's sake not to leave him behind.

"Well, I tell you, the lift was overfull then; but Joe sprang from it, and seizing hold of the other one, with the help of those inside, hauled him in, and all we heard him say was: 'Tell her I did it, an' God bless thee, mate!'

"Then we heard the roar of the flames, and we never saw Joe again."

The man sat quietly for a second or two, and though his voice did not falter, he added in a softer tone:

"But the next day, when the fire had burned itself out, I was one of them that went down into the pit.

"There was a crowd of the miners' wives and children standing at the pit mouth, and when we came up again, we laid a body gently on the ground, and the men took off their caps, and said ne'er a word, while the women cried, and many of them sobbed aloud. It was blackened and burned, and but for where the pitman's jacket saved him, it might have been no more than the earth it was lying on.

"But as we stooped tenderly to raise and carry the body away, the jacket fell off, and there on that part where once beat a true heart, was a lock of woman's hair.

"'He had begged it of her,' she said, 'so often, she had not the heart to refuse him;' and God only knows, mate, what comfort poor Joe might have felt in wearing it for her sake.

"We buried him with that little curl lying on his breast, and with many a sob, and many a 'God bless thee, poor lad!' we lowered him to his rest.

"We planted them little flowers, and it seemed to me as if they growed brighter on his tomb than anywhere else."

He paused again, and as I stole a look at him, I saw two large tears rolling slowly down his hard face.

He was a little embarrassed at my observing them, I think, for he said:

"Don't you think worse of me, mate, because I'm giving way a bit, but I am the man Joe saved."

A. GOODMAN.

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HIGH PLAY.

A COMEDY OFF THE STAGE.

By George Manville Fenn.

SUMMARY.

The story opens with an interview between Lady Bruetoun and her son Roderick, in which she endeavours to induce him to give up fast living and marry Olive, Isaac Emsworth's heiress. After the interview he goes to see his racehorse in the country with Lucy Lee, a chorus girl, familiarly known as "Baby." Emsworth takes Olive to consult Dr. Murray, who advises a voyage to South Africa in the *Greyburg*, in which he also is going. Roderick, who is friendly with Murray, comes for advice on the terribly bad condition of his health, and the Doctor recommends a trip in the same boat. Lucy Lee, on being discarded, returns to her aunt's theatrical shop in Great Russell Street, and tells her the facts of the case, intimating her intention of refusing all the money and presents he offered her.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Threatening Cloud.

"Let me come to you with nothing but what's my own, Auntie," sobbed the girl, sinking upon her knees to clasp the woman's hands and press them to her lips. "I'll be like a servant to you, if you like; only take me, Auntie dear, and let me try and forget it all."

"Take you? Oh, my own, own pet!"

There was another long embrace, and then Lucy rose to her feet, to stand looking hard and strange.

"What is it, my pet?" whispered Mrs. Duncan. "Don't look like that. Are you faint? Let me send for the stout and hysters now."

"Auntie," cried the girl passionately, "I can't bear it. I can't sit down like this without a word."

"Then you should have let him have it at once, my pet."

"No, no, I don't mean him. I couldn't hurt him; I mean her. She has taken him away from me. She can never love him as I do."

"Never, my precious, and serve him right. But come and sit down again, and don't, pray, look like that. You frighten me. I know it's hard to bear, but bear it we must, just as I had to when your pore dear uncle died."

The girl was now pacing the room, her face looking pale and convulsed, as she held her hands tightly clenched before her.

"Don't, don't, my precious, take on about it. Have too much sperritt. Let him marry her if he likes. It won't be very long before he'll wish it all undone, see if he don't. You let him marry; it'll be like your revenge."

"I can't, I can't!" cried Lucy, in a low, harsh whisper. "Now it has come to that, I feel I must do something, Aunt," she cried fiercely. "I told him so. I shall kill her!"

"Lucy! My own gal! Don't, don't talk like that. You can't do it, you know."

"I can, and I will," she almost whispered now. And there was a look in her beautiful eyes, an intensity in her manner, that sent a chill through the coarse woman at her side.

"You can't—you can't do it, my dear. Don't you see there's the lor. It would stop you. It always does stop you from doing what you like. I never see the use of the lor. It never done me any good. If it had done its duty it would have punished some of the people who robbed me. If it had I should have been a rich woman by now. No, my darling, you mustn't talk about killing her, you know, because that would mean killing my darling, too."

"Well, and what does it matter now?"

"Why, my precious, it would mean killing me."

"Poor old Auntie!" said the girl, with a wild laugh. "But I could——" She whispered something in her ear, finishing with a strange malignant laugh.

"And—spoil her beauty for her, and make him hate the sight of her? Yes, there's something in that, my dear. He'd soon have done with her then. And what right had she to come atween you two? But oh! no, no, my darling," continued the woman with a shudder; "you're not the sort of girl to do that, Lucy. There's the lor, too, again, and the perlice. No, no, my precious, you mustn't do that: I can't have you hurt or took away now I've got you back, but if it must be done," she continued huskily. "I wouldn't mind—if it will do you good, my dear—I'd do it, dear, for you."

"I shall kill her!"

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"You would do it!" cried Lucy fiercely. "Why, she never did you harm."

"No, but she's ruined you. Isn't that enough?"

The girl made no reply, but stood gazing straight before her into vacancy; a vacancy peopled, however, by the shadowy forms of those who had destroyed the happiness of her life.

At last her lips moved, and a peculiar, intent look was in her eyes, as she said, as if to herself:

"He could never look upon her again—so easy, at any time. Why not at the church?"

"Lucy, my darling!" cried her aunt in alarm, "what is it? What did you——"

"Say?" said the girl, looking at her strangely. "I did not speak, Auntie, I was thinking."

"Thinking!"

"Yes; of what I ought to do. Auntie, I must bring him back to me, so there isn't room for both of us to live."

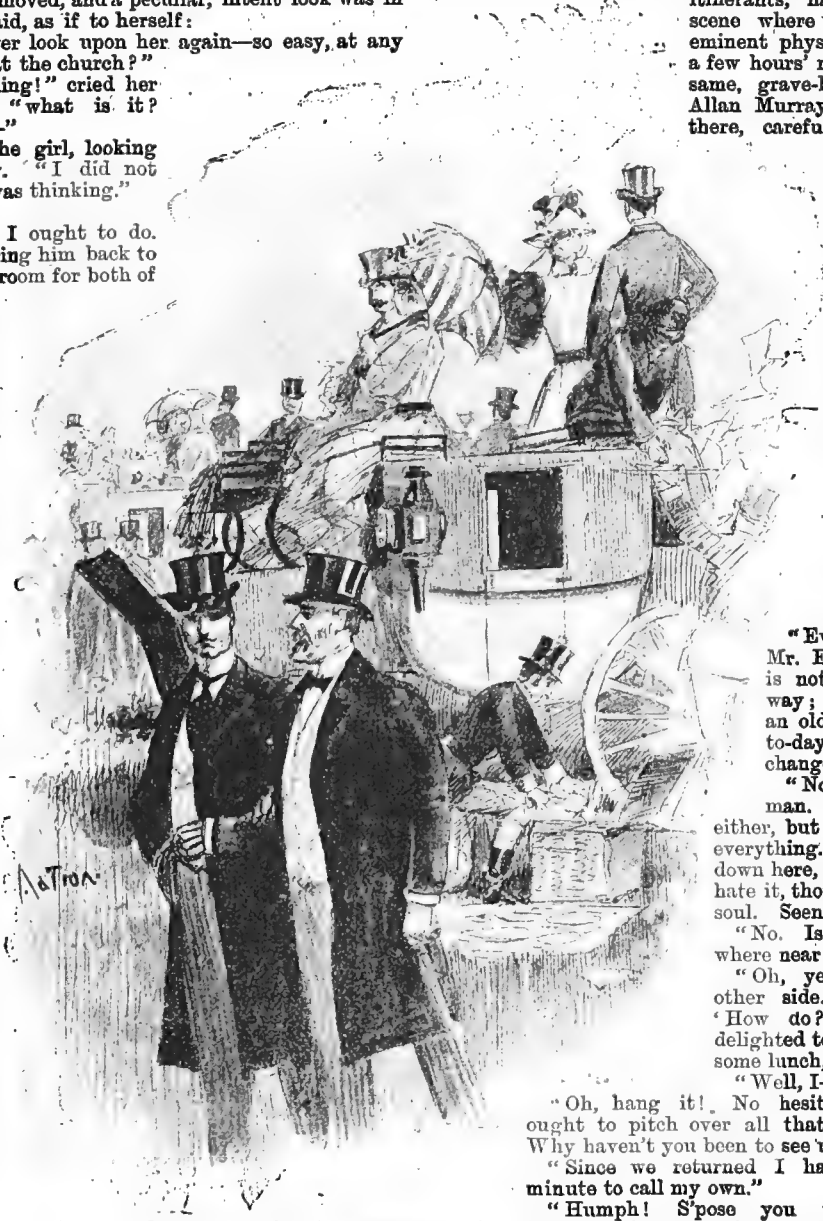
The aunt caught the girl's hand and swung her round to gaze wildly in her face.

"Lucy, darling, don't look like that."

"And he'd never look me in the eyes again—never kiss me and call me all his own," said the girl with a shudder. "It would make him hate me, but he would not love her, and if I did it everything would end."

Mrs. Duncan looked in alarm at her niece, and then about the room as if for help, but saw nothing save a grotesque mask which so hung in one of the corners of the shop that it seemed to be leering round at them with one eye.

Turning again with a shudder to her niece, she seized her by the arms and shook her, but without chasing the fixed strange look from her eyes.



"May I ask your meaning, Mr. Emsworth?"

"Lucy, my precious, what is it?" she cried wildly. "What is it you are thinking, dear?"

"Only whether it would be very hard to die."

CHAPTER IX.

The Dark Races of Mankind.

They generally had a drenching rain at the Highdown races, but this was an exception. The ladies' dresses, the dusty roads, the bright sunshine, all indicated a fine day, and the place was crowded, while carriages of every description were packed wherever the stands had left room.

The fine weather might have been the attraction, but that crowded course, with the hurrying of people to get good places for the best race, the yelling of the betting men, and the mingled strains of bad music cruelly murdered by itinerants, hardly seemed the scene where a hard working, eminent physician would go for a few hours' relaxation. All the same, grave-looking, handsome Allan Murray, M.D., was down there, carefully scanning the carriages, with the consequence that the lines of thought on his brow seemed to deepen. He had been along one line and back by another, evidently in search of a particular vehicle, but in vain; and he was about to cross the course when a quick, decisive voice behind him exclaimed:

"Why, 'tis you! How are you, Doctor? Who'd have thought of seeing you here!"

"Evidently not you, Mr. Emsworth. Racing is not certainly in my way; but the horse of an old schoolfellow runs to-day, and I wanted a change, so I came down."

"No law against it, man. Not in my way, either, but I like her to see everything. Plenty of society down here, and so we came. I hate it, though—I do, 'pon my soul. Seen her?"

"No. Is the carriage anywhere near?"

"Oh, yes; just over the other side. Come and say 'How do?' Olive will be delighted to see you. There's some lunch, too, on the way."

"Well, I——"

"Oh, hang it! No hesitation, man. You ought to pitch over all that shyness with me. Why haven't you been to see us?"

"Since we returned I have hardly had a minute to call my own."

"Humph! S'pose you would be pretty busy," said Emsworth, accompanying the words with a keen look; "but that isn't it altogether. I studied you a bit, Doctor, for I like you, I do really."

Murray looked at him, and a peculiar suffocating feeling came into his breast.

"Yes, that's how it is, Murray, and I'm sorry. I'm not blind, you know. Had to fight too many clever men to do what I've done. But I thought better of you."

"May I ask your meaning, Mr. Emsworth?"

"I'm a plain man, Doctor, and I'll tell you at once. Look

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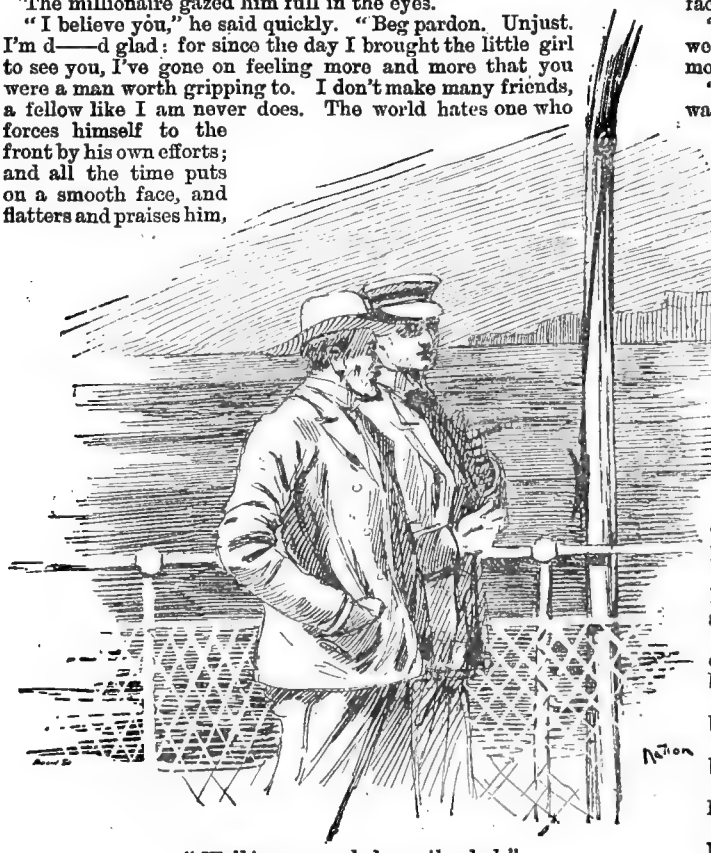
here: I rose from the ranks, and I'm not ashamed of it; but I'm always getting my back set up by some one or another who looks down on the plebeian or *parvenu*, or whatever they call me. I'm tolerated in society for her sake. They let me in because of the heiress. I'm not blind, and I put up with a good deal. I know I am wanting in the polish of a university man, and can't talk as society people do. I've had to make my way. I drop an 'h' now and then, I suppose, or do something wrong in society eyes, but I took to you during our Cape trip, and I thought you too sound and solid a man to look down on one who is self-made. I did, Doctor, upon my soul."

"You wrong me, Mr. Emsworth, indeed, you do."

The millionaire gazed him full in the eyes.

"I believe you," he said quickly. "Beg pardon. Unjust. I'm d——d glad: for since the day I brought the little girl to see you, I've gone on feeling more and more that you were a man worth gripping to. I don't make many friends, a fellow like I am never does. The world hates one who forces himself to the front by his own efforts; and all the time puts on a smooth face, and flatters and praises him,



"Walking up and down the deck."

and friends come to him in shoals, like flies round a bit of carrion, eh?"

"But I don't think you have much cause to complain."

"Don't you?" said the other abruptly. "I do. Why haven't you been?"

"Well, really, I——"

"Humph! ha! Waited for a formal invitation to dinner, I suppose?"

"No, indeed, you wrong me."

"Didn't I say to you over and over again, when you and I were walking up and down the deck of that vessel having our cigar: 'Come and see me, Doctor, when we get back, and I shall be glad?'"

"Yes; often."

"Then why didn't you come?"

"Such invitations, kindly meant, are so common, Mr. Emsworth. People give them freely and think no more of them. I am a busy man. You are a busy man, and——"

"Are busy men to have no rest, sir? You ought to have come, that is if you can bear the society of so common-place a chap."

"Don't say that again," said the Doctor warmly. "I will come and prove to you that your words do me an injustice."

"Hah, then I'm very glad I came down to-day. Thought it a horrible nuisance, for I felt that I shouldn't meet a soul I liked. Come along, here's the carriage. Olive will be delighted; she has felt quite hurt at not seeing our sea-going friend, and has been at me to get up a dinner and invite you. Here, Olive, my dear, I've found an old friend."

Allan Murray's heart gave a great throb as he saw the bright flush and the look of eager pleasure on his patient's face as she held out her hand to him.

"Oh, Doctor, Doctor," she cried, "what have we been doing to offend you? Back a whole month, and you have not been near."

"Why, you have not wanted me, and do not want me now. What do you say, Lady Braetoun?" he said merrily, as he turned and took the hand of that lady, who gave him her best society smile to conceal a slight feeling of annoyance which had troubled her on seeing the very warm reception the young physician received.

"Indeed, no, Mr. Murray—I beg pardon—Doctor Murray. I have been telling Mr. Emsworth that the voyage has done wonders."

"Voyage and the Doctor's advice together," said Emsworth bluntly. "There, don't scold him, Olive. I've given it him well. He is very repentant, and won't do so any more."

"Then I shall forgive him," cried Olive playfully. "But oh, Doctor Murray, do you care for all this stupid racing?"

"I'll answer for him," said her father quickly. "No; he doesn't. Got too much brains in his head. Come down to see Braetoun's horse win."

"And it will win. Don't you think so, Mr. Emsworth?" said Lady Braetoun with real anxiety.

"Can't say, ma'am. Only the knowing ones can tell. I don't understand horses. Has he been, Olive?"

"Lord Braetoun? No, papa, dear. He has to be in the—saddling-field, don't they call it?"

"Paddock, my dear. Hope you are not betting."

"But I am, papa," said the girl, colouring a little. "A pair of gloves."

"Then I hope you'll lose them," said Emsworth gruffly. "I hate racing and betting, and all the rest of it."

"I'm very, very glad to hear you say so, Mr. Emsworth," cried Lady Braetoun. "But, you see, it has grown to be such a custom with the aristocracy that I do not wonder at Roderick taking it up. But we shall have to wean him from it now. Eh, Olive, my dear?"

The girl looked at her quickly, and then turned, to find Murray's eyes fixed upon her intently in a gaze which made her colour vividly.

"I—I—isn't that the bell for the next race, Lady Braetoun?"

"I suppose so, my dear," said her chaperon blandly, and, adjusting her gold-rimmed glasses, she took up a race card and began to study it, while a curious pang shot through Murray, and he turned to look toward the course, along which a line of mounted police were slowly riding.

He was brought back to the present from a memory of many scenes on the great ocean-going steamer, when Olive was receiving the incense of the younger passengers, and most of all from Braetoun, by a hand upon his arm.

"Want to see this tomfoolery?" said Emsworth in a

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low voice, only heard by the ears for which the words were intended.

"I? No," was the reply, as the crowd seemed to begin to revolve before the Doctor's eyes.

"Come on, then; I want to talk to you. Take care of her, Lady Braetoun. We'll come back after the race for some lunch."

Murray made an effort to calm the rush of emotion which sent the blood hurrying to his temples, and he turned and raised his hat, meeting Olive's eyes again directed at him in a deprecating way, which seemed to say: "Don't be angry with me, Doctor, please."

The next minute he was with his companion outside the crowd, and felt Olive's father thrust an arm through his.

"Hah, we can breathe now," said Emsworth. "How I do hate a mob. Look here, Doctor. I've wanted you to come and see us ever since we got back, so as to tell you what has been going on."

Murray was silent. He knew, and dare not trust himself to speak, for it was all too plain. Olive liked him—her every look and word told him that she liked him. It was all over now; the hopes that had flashed through his brain, and had grown brighter and brighter ever since the day when they first met, had suddenly become dark. She liked him: she looked up to him evidently as a friend whose respect she cared to win, and he had been, dreamer that he was, hoping that some day their intimacy might ripen into love.

Emsworth went on talking about knowing someone before the voyage was planned, about his being so unwell, and yet so much in earnest that when he heard they were going abroad he determined to follow them.

"And you must have seen, my dear Doctor, how devoted he was to her all through the voyage."

These words sounded plainly; the others had all been blurred. And now Murray answered slowly:

"Yes—yes, I saw that Braetoun was attentive; several of the other young passengers were."

"Yes, but he was regularly smitten, and no wonder."

The father looked round proudly at the young doctor, who said in a voice he did not know for his own:

"No wonder!" and then felt as if he would have given anything to be alone.

"Well, of course, I was a bit flattered, and—yes, I'll own it like a man and a father—a bit pleased. Fine old family, high position. Proud thing for me. She's all I care about in the world, and I'll say it: I shall be glad to see her Lady Braetoun, and the old woman the dowager. I shan't marry her though; too wide awake for that! and I shall take good care that she doesn't interfere too much with the young folks. But there, the old girl has behaved very well. I'm not blind. She took to chaperoning Olive from the first, and if ever she tells me she hadn't certain ideas of her own from the beginning I shall say something rude."

There was a burst of shouting, and one of "They're off!" but it was all a confused murmur to Murray. He had only ears for the words of the man at his side.

"It has all been very nice and above board," he continued. "Braetoun was as attentive as could be, but he never spoke till we got back, and then he came to me like a man—a nobleman, and told me he loved her."

Murray drew a deep breath, as if he were in agony, and the scene began to reel round him again.

"Said he had never known the slightest desire to join his fate to any woman before, but that since he had seen Olive life seemed a different thing. Told me as a man of the world honestly that he had been a bit rackety, and fooled away a lot of money, but that henceforth he was going to make a fresh start, and that if I would give my consent to his asking her to be his wife he'd give her a proud position in London, the capital of the world, and—well, all that a honest English gentleman should say to the father of the girl he loved."

"And did he—did he say anything about his health?" said Murray, dragging the words out of him as if they were hard to say.

"His health? Oh, yes! That he had been a bit bad, but the sea trip had set him up and he was a better man than ever."

"A better man than ever," said the Doctor through his teeth.

"Yes, and that he was going to drop racing and sell his horses to pay his debts; and then he quite won me over by his honesty."

"By his honesty!"

"Yes. That's about all. I wanted to tell you for you to congratulate me. Old schoolfellow of yours, you see, and of course you'll be glad to see him well married. I don't mind his being poor. Olive will have plenty, and I shall keep in the background. I'm not going to be forcing myself to the front and be always slapping him on the back so that people may see, and as good as say to them: 'This is Lord Braetoun, my son-in-law.' No; I want her to be happy, that's all I think about. Well, say something, man."

Lady Braetoun.

Murray started at this abrupt request.

"And Miss Emsworth, sir, what did she say?"

"Eh? Well, at first she wanted to beg off. So young, you see. She was flattered, but a bit startled, and I don't honestly believe that she had ever thought much about leaving me, but by degrees she has grown pleased and animated, and the old lady makes a deal of fuss over her, and I suppose it will be all right. No mother to advise her, and that's where Lady Braetoun comes in so well. Oh, it's all right, I think."

"All right, he thinks! Does he know—can he know one tithe of what I could tell him? Ought I to tell him, and stop what would be an infamy? And if I did, what would she say? How could I go impartially and speak? God help me! What shall I do?"

Strange, wild thoughts to torture a loving man, there, in the midst of an excited yelling crowd, for the race was over and the numbers were up.

"Humph! Race is run," said Emsworth sourly. "Braetoun's nag was a bit of a favourite, I hear. Between ourselves, doctor, I hope he has lost. Make him disgusted and ready to give it up. Horse racing's a fine thing. I like to see the beautiful creatures they breed, and to see them run; but modern horse-racing is a miserable set-out of gambling, carried on by blacklegs and swindlers to such an extent that your honest lover of good sport has no chance. I want to get Braetoun out of it as soon as I can. Best thing, eh?"

"Yes, certainly," said Murray, for his companion waited for him to speak.

"Come to the carriage now, and have a bit of lunch. I

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wanted to tell you about your little patient. God bless her! You wish her happiness, I know."

"From my very soul!" cried Murray, with a sudden burst of energy which made Emsworth look at him wonderingly, and then smile with satisfaction as he pressed his companion's arm.

"Thankye, Murray, thankye. That does me good. I wasn't blind; I saw how my darling had impressed you during the voyage. Do you know, she confided to me, how shocked and startled she was when we first met. She said she expected to find you a grey headed old gentleman, but you won upon her at once, and she soon felt as if she had known you from a child, and could come to you for advice and help in everything."

Murray breathed hard and struggled to keep a calm, composed expression of countenance.

"I was glad to hear her talk so," continued Emsworth, "for I've great faith in Olive's clear-sightedness. It shows me I was not wrong about you. But there—that's over, and I'm glad of it. You don't say much about it, but that's your way. You never do say much. Think the more, eh?"

"Yes," said Murray gravely. "I think the more."

"All a dream," he added to himself; "and now I am awake."

"Ah, Murray, how are you, old man?" rang out as Braetoun caught sight of him, and held out his hand. "Come, Mr. Emsworth, we want that glass of champagne you talked about, so as to drink to my ill-luck."

"What, have you lost?"

"Lost!" cried Braetoun, with a reckless laugh, "why, the horse was nowhere. My Bella Donna could have won, though, easily. Yes, Murray, my usual luck—lost."

"Then we'll have the champagne at once," said Emsworth, rubbing his hands. "I'm heartily glad of it, my boy, heartily."

"Thank you," said Braetoun, laughing, and turning to Olive who looked troubled. "Encouraging, isn't it, for a poor fellow!"

Emsworth looked from the young man to Olive and back, before placing his glass to his lips.

The servant was busy the while, arranging the contents of the lunch basket, and though Murray felt that he must go where he could be alone and think, he could not drag himself away. It was like a waking nightmare to him, in which everything was unreal, even to the last scene of that fateful day.

Murray saw her eyes flash through her thin veil.

For just in the middle of the luncheon, while Braetoun was attending to Olive, who, with animated countenance, was listening to something he was saying, the young man's eyes became suddenly fixed, and a cadaverous change came over his face.

For the moment Murray was the only one present to notice it, and as he took a step forward, glass in hand, and followed his old companion's eyes, he saw that they were fixed upon an elegantly dressed lady who had just unloosed her hand from where it rested upon the arm of a heavy, over-dressed woman. Murray saw her eyes flash through her thin veil, and then she turned to gaze searchingly and fiercely at Olive, who involuntarily shrank away and laid her hand upon Braetoun's arm.

It was all so momentary that Murray was the only other witness of the situation in the comedy of life, till, with a wild passionate cry the girl stepped closely up, then raised her hands, and Olive uttered a faint cry.

(To be continued.)

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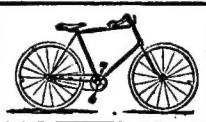

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EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT.—The results of the year's working surpasses everything before accomplished. The increase in business in the past, and the still greater increase expected in the future, have rendered it necessary for the Company to take in a further considerable portion of the Broad Street Corner property.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.—During the year further efforts have been made to meet the requirements of the Old Age Pension Scheme, under the Company's Endowment Assurance policies, and Special Tables of Benefits have been issued.

SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL TABLES.—These also have been prepared, and they show the great advantages to be derived from the payment of premiums either yearly, half-yearly, or quarterly instead of weekly. Under these tables a considerable amount of business has already been transacted.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.—The total income of the Company was £438,250, and total expenditure £395,249, leaving a balance on the year's accounts of £43,001.

NEW BUSINESS.—The total number of policies issued for the year was 354,805 at an annual premium of £218,587.

CLAIMS.—The amount paid in claims during the year in the Ordinary department was £15,527, including £1,153 in surrender claims. The amount paid in the Industrial department was £160,295, including £8,051 in surrender claims.

The Directors recommend a dividend at the rate of 12½ per cent. upon the paid-up capital of the Company, free of income-tax. This dividend, which is in course of payment, is the largest distribution hitherto paid to the shareholders, and the prospect is of a steadily increasing dividend from year to year. The shares—£1 fully paid—are now quoted at 50s., and at this high premium it is difficult to obtain them.

A YOUNG ENTHUSIAST.—More than thirty years have elapsed since Mr. Port, a young enthusiast in the cause of industrial assurance, conceived the idea of establishing a company in the great Midland capital. He had unbounded faith in the success of a company offering broad and liberal conditions, and was prepared to deal generously with claims as they arose.

A NOBLE SELF-SACRIFICE.—For the first few months after the establishment of the Company the indoor staff of the office consisted solely of Henry Port, and such was the arduous character of his occupation that he laboured by night as well as by day, snatching an occasional hour of repose in the office itself.

The DAY of FEEBLE THINGS.—In the first five years the average premium income was £2,131. The average annual income during the last quinquennium is £347,819. The comparison is convincing proof of the growing confidence of the people, and of the expanding strength and usefulness of the Company. The premium income of the year 1895-6 exceeds that of the average of the quinquennium, and amounts to £428,089.

THE TESTIMONY OF FIGURES.—The premium income for the last thirteen years is briefly stated as below:—

PREMIUM INCOME.

1884	£118,017
1885	130,057
1886	142,864
1887	153,384
1888	173,543
1889	207,575
1890	243,889
1891	274,969
1892	289,406
1893	306,234
1894	335,282
1895	380,088
1896	428,089

The Company now celebrates its 30th Anniversary. There are only ten other British Life Offices which possess a greater income. Among them are the following:

Established.	Names.	Annual Premium Income.
1815	Scottish Widows'	... £947,919
848	Gre-h m	... £862,266
1825	Standard	... £786,246
1823	North British and Mercantile	... £678,356
1837	S ottish Provident	... £585,471
1843	Star	... £459,186
1840	U. K. Temperance and Gene.al	... £439,024
1845	Royal (1895)	... £402,460

These Offices were all established before the BRITISH WORKMAN'S and GENERAL ASSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED.

EXTRACT FROM THE REPORT.—The results of the year's working surpass everything before accomplished. The increase in business in the past, and the still greater increase expected in the future has rendered it necessary for the Company to take in a considerable proportion of the Broad Street Corner property.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.—During the year further efforts have been made to meet the requirements of the Old Age Pension Scheme, under the Company's Endowment Assurance policies, and Special Tables of Benefits have been issued.

SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL TABLES.—These also have been prepared, and they show the great advantages to be derived from the payment of premiums either yearly, half yearly, or quarterly instead of weekly. Under these tables a considerable amount of business has already been transacted.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE.—The total income of the Company was £438,250, and total expenditure £395,249, leaving a balance on the year's accounts of £43,001.

NEW BUSINESS.—The total number of policies issued for the year was 354,805 at an annual premium of £218,587.

CLAIMS.—The amount paid in claims during the year in the Ordinary department was £15,527, including £1,153 in surrender claims. The amount paid in the Industrial department was £160,295, including £8,051 in surrender claims.

TRIUMPHAL PROGRESS.—The progress has been triumphal. The modest venture of 1866 has developed into a large and prosperous company, with a total income of £438,250, and total funds amounting to £249,429.

A NATIONAL INSTITUTION.—In the British Workman's and General Assurance Company Mr. Port has built up a national institution of great usefulness to the community, and it will remain an enduring memorial of his life's work.

BRITISH WORKMAN'S AND GENERAL ASSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

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THE IDEAL LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY.